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JACOB'S LADDER.



BY

BARBARA WORDSWORTH.



600064980X





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JACOB'S ♦ LADDER.

BY

BARBARA WORDSWORTH.

With Musical Illustrations

BY

ARTHUR HENRY BROWN,

COMPOSER OF "MISSA SERAPHICA," "A CENTURY OF HYMN TUNES," "ORGAN
HARMONIES FOR THE GREGORIAN PSALM TONES," ETC.

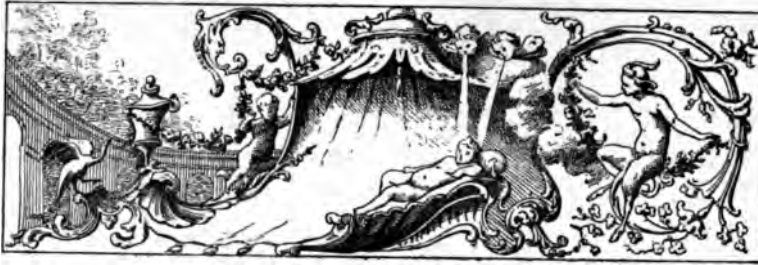


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TO
MY MOTHER.





THE HIDDEN LAND.

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.



SURELY I was desolate. But a little while ago the adoring child of a tender mother, whose overshadowing had stood between me and all rough blasts of Fortune, and taken the fiery sting from every trial. I was desolate, indeed, when more than a year ago they laid her down to rest; and thrice desolate now when Death, who had been busy among my dear ones ever since, had just parted me from the last of those who were bound to me by ties of kindred, and in whose love earth still held for me a home. Mother, father, brother, sister, were names that I should speak familiarly no more. My lot was among strangers; and for kindness I must look thenceforward to that pity

which, while it is said to be akin to love, may, to my thinking, be but her foster-sister after all.

Household words put aside—no longer serviceable. No more use for the “I remember,” “Do not you remember?” which give their highest zest to the recallings of the past. Old associations, tender memories, light words fraught with subtle meanings, thoughts half expressed, stirring whole trains of laughter, love and tears—all well-nigh valueless as broken shells.

So was it with me, and with such reflections was my heart engaged, on the morning of a day that stands out in my memory in bold relief against its fellows of that dreary time—that shines rosy-tinted among the cheerless shadows of those other, empty days. I had been dreaming over night. They were waking dreams, in which I had lost myself in the late summer twilight, making the most of a short and, as it seemed to me, well-earned freedom. Some words I had lately met in a book of Julian Hawthorne’s, joined to the inevitable direction of my thoughts when left to wander free—an indulgence which it was one of my most irksome, but, I considered, most obvious duties never to accord them in the busy hours—conspired to set me wondering, dreaming, longing for some knowledge of the life “behind the veil!” Did those I had lost no longer care for me? Did my mother’s gentle hand no more stretch itself out to me with a mother’s yearning need to comfort all my woe? If, from afar off, I were visible to her, might she not also show herself to me? It would not cause me any shock of fear, I thought, while tears of self-pity, excusable perhaps in such an utter loneli-

ness, were gathering in my eyes. I would not start or cry ; I would not by one gesture of repulsion so wrong myself as to startle that sweet presence from my view. And then I bethought me that a spirit has not flesh and bones as we have ; and how, then, could it make itself visible to me ? I could not see my mother with the eyes of sense, nor hear that dearest voice with ears of flesh. Yet, if there were guardian angels, who so fitted to be mine as she ? If this were so indeed—if she were herself my guardian angel, divinely appointed both in earth and Heaven—her gentle ministrations had not ceased with parting breath ; would never cease while her child had need of them ; and might put forth hands of tenderness, that need being past, to draw her to the home of changeless love.

Oh, that I might *know* if these things were ! With such thoughts, hopes, yearnings, the twilight had been full. When the candles were lighted and there followed the final hour's companionship with the uncompanionable, it sufficed not to put the great longing for the spiritual nearness of the lost ones from my heart. When I lay down to rest it was strong upon me. It is hardly worthy of notice, but it lives in my recollection of that night, that I slept well and soundly, with a freedom from dreams and disturbance such as I had not known for long.

In the morning, however, I felt unrefreshed. Thoughts the saddest and most sombre settled down, as it were, on my troubled spirit the moment I awoke, and continued to harass me all the time I made preparations for the day.

It was the morning of my birthday, and, as such, brought

the worst bitterness of memory to my heart. On this day, only a year ago, one loving voice—though the dearest of all, was mute—had been left to give kindly greeting; one loving hand still brought to me the offering, whose priceless value in my sight was, “not the gift—but for the giver.” Now the last voice was silent, and the last hand stirred not.

The day, falling in mid summer, had naturally connected itself long ago in our household thoughts with a burst of royal June roses. For many a happy year it had been my mother’s wont to come early to my bedside with the fairest and sweetest treasure that her garden could afford.

Even when I was away from home, her tender thought would follow me in kind remembrance of the day. A letter, with some little gift, was sure to await me on my birthday morning, wherever I might be. Not the flower. That sweet token of a closer union had been given me only when we two were together. To-day, not one remained on earth who would care to remember the occasion for my sake.

So thinking, with a heart bowed down, I left my room and slowly descended the stairs. On entering the dining-room, I found myself alone—with a slight feeling of surprise, owing, I recall, to a certain premonition of companionship which I had experienced on opening the door. Glancing at my plate on the breakfast-table, I perceived awaiting me a letter and a small packet, which made my heart leap up. For one short moment. Quickly I told myself the folly of indulging in thoughts that had led to such a causeless tremor at a sight which could, in reality, have no connection with their source.

The letter proved to bear the postmark of our dear old home. It was singular it should have come to-day ; but the letter and packet were both addressed in the writing of one who had but slight associations with the place, and who could have had no knowledge whatever of my domestic interest in the date. I opened the parcel. It contained a small cardboard box. In the box lay a white moss rosebud, pure as snow.

With hands I could not keep from trembling a little, I now opened the letter. It began :—

“MY DEAR ISOBEL,

“I am staying at H——. Yesterday afternoon we drove into the town, and went over the fine old church. In walking round the beautiful churchyard, I stopped by your mother's grave, and gathered a rosebud, as I thought you would like——”

The flower—the rose—the white moss rosebud, from my darling's grave ! O mother ! mother ! mother ! I will give you back its bloom, behind the Veil—behind the Veil !

Behind the Veil.

Words by BARBARA WORDSWORTH.

Music by ARTHUR II. BROWN.

Andante moderato. f

The piano introduction consists of two staves. The right hand plays a series of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

RECITATIVE (accompanied).
à piacere.

mp
1. In the lands beyond the sun-set, High-er

The first system of the recitative features a vocal line on a single staff and a piano accompaniment on two staves. The vocal line begins with a half note, followed by eighth and sixteenth notes. The piano accompaniment consists of chords and moving lines in both hands.

than the starlight's home, Wherefore dwell the lost be-lov-ed,

p mf p cres.

The second system continues the recitative. The vocal line has a melodic contour with some grace notes. The piano accompaniment includes dynamic markings of piano (p), mezzo-forte (mf), piano (p), and crescendo (cres.).

Slentando. pp
Whence their voi-ces ne-ver come, Whence their voi-ces ne-ver come?

Slentando, p pp

The third system concludes the recitative. It features a vocal line and piano accompaniment. The tempo and dynamics are marked as 'Slentando' and 'pp' (pianissimo). The piano accompaniment has a more active role in the final phrase.

BEHIND THE VEIL.

mp à tempo. *cres.* *f con passione.*

Whither touch nor sight can fol - low ; And i - ma - gi - na - tion

p a tempo. *cres.* *f*

faints, Till she find some mys - tic re - gion Deep e - nough.....

f *f* *p*

..... to hide..... the saints, Till she find some mys - tic

pp *cres.* *mf*

re - gion Deep e - nough to hide the saints ?.....

rall. *p* *rall.* *pp*

BEHIND THE VEIL.

mf 2. Seek not such an i - dle dreamland,
3. Not be - hind the sun - set glo - ry;

Andantino. ♩ = 92.
mf *p*

Shape-less, mute to mor - tal ear; Ea - si - ly our shadows hide them—
Not be - yond the pa - lest star; Near - er to our hearts than life is—

cres. *cres.*

mp Lo, the spi - rits are too near! Lo, the spi - rits are too near!
There the lost be - lov - ed are! There the lost be - lov - ed are!

pp

rall. e dim. Lo, the spi - rits, the spi - rits are too near!
There the lost, there the lost be - lov - ed are!

tr *pp* *morendo.*

BEHIND THE VEIL.

IN the lands beyond the sunset,
Higher than the starlight's home—
Wherefore dwell the lost beloved
Whence their voices never come?

Whither touch nor sight can follow,
And Imagination faints,
Till she find some mystic region
Deep enough to hide the saints.

Seek not such an idle dreamland!
Shapeless, mute to mortal ear,
Easily our shadows hide them;
Lo! the spirits are too near.

Not behind the sunset glory,
Not beyond the palest star;
Nearer to our hearts than life is—
There the lost beloved are.



GLADYS.

CHAPTER I.

Ruhig mag ich euch erscheinen,
Ruhig gehen sehn.
Eure Augen stilles weinen
Kann ich nicht verstehn.



THE story of a life. So I may truly call it, though I am only five-and-thirty now, and scarcely feel so old—with one half of me at least; yet I doubt not that the last page worthy to be called historical in the book of my earthly existence was turned over two years ago, and is done with for ever on this side Jordan's wave.

Mine was a lonely young life. I never had a mother from the day that I was born. My father had me christened Gladys, and for short used to call me Glad. I have often thought he might more suitably have named me Mara, for the bitter cost my advent had exacted at his hands. But I suppose he was too good to think of it so, and that, so far

as it was possible, I was some sort of consolation in his loneliness.

There was not a very close sympathy between us two. Many were the solitary hours we were wont to spend under one roof—how occupied by him I often wonder, even now. He was not a reading man. He had been intended by my grandfather for the Church. He was sent to the University in pursuance of this plan, but at the end of his first term came down, declaring it was only a waste of time and money to keep him there; that he had no vocation to the holy office; and that he would rather join his uncle in business, as he had once had the offer of doing from Geoffery Horne himself—who was a shipowner, very rich, rather old, easy-tempered, and a bachelor.

My grandfather had not done very well in the world—refusing to join the business, and living on the fortune brought him by his wife. He had only one son and one daughter; so, as father used to say, they did very well. But, when his son preferred a seat in his uncle's counting-house to an ecclesiastical career, my grandfather was not so much aggrieved as his friends expected to see him, having, perhaps, lived long enough to repent the error of his own youth.

Before my father married, his uncle, Geoffery Horne, was dead; and before that he had been made a partner in the firm of Horne, Martyn, & Horne. The firm always retained its name. At Geoffery's death it should have been called Martyn & Horne, and afterwards Horne & Martyn; but I have never seen anything but Horne, Martyn, & Horne

at the top of the sheets of blue paper that now and then find their way from the office to my sylvan nest above the sea.

It was many years before my father married again. A second daughter was born to him when I was nearly ten years old. By this time my father only rode over to the office at Durling two or three times a week. Young Martyn began coming over to Burnside about this time, on the other days, with papers from the office for father to see to, or his letters, or a business message from old Martyn. He was quite a boy, and of no account whatever at Durling then; but my father liked him, and often told me that he thought young Martyn would make a man; and that he would rather trust him even now with some matters than old Willis, the senior clerk, who had grown gray in the office.

My father was surely in one respect a most unfortunate man. When little Agatha was two years old she caught a fever; and in nursing her, we supposed, her young mother also caught it, and died. A second time his infant child was spared to him. A second time poor father lost his wife. Of course he said to me, "You must be a mother to her, Glad!" And to the best of my power I filled the vacant place.

Between me and Agatha grew up a devotion almost, if not entirely, filial and maternal in its kind, until it sank, or softened, into a pure, deep, sisterly regard. The child became a woman early. To outward seeming we were almost equals before she was fifteen. No real equality, indeed, existed. No equality of inward growth is possible between a little

girl of fourteen and a woman of three-and-twenty, unless it may be so when they have been reared at the opposite poles of society.

When I was about sixteen James Evered Martyn fell in love with me. My father's health had failed considerably. He was never a strong man. He now rode over to business one day in every week, and on nearly every one of the remaining six young Martyn visited our home. Father could not do without him. Five days the young man often came over for his pleasure, and on Sunday for his own. Frequently he stayed to tea with us. We always kept early hours. Father liked it; and it interfered with no one for us to dine at one and sup at eight, as we kept no company, and consequently seldom joined in the social gatherings of our few and scattered neighbours.

Father could not bear a noise. He shrank, on the rare occasions of our dining out, from the clatter of plates and the jargon of voices at the dinner-table; and, above all, from the introduction of songs, pianoforte solos, &c., during the evening. "It was all noise," he used to say; and the verdict could not always be disputed. But his horror of being assailed by any but single sounds grew on him to an extent that was most inconvenient, both to himself and others. Latterly, therefore, we had given up society, and were almost entirely secluded from our kind. Acquaintance was kept up between us and a few families, but the intercourse it engendered was very slight. "James Martyn is a quiet young man," my father used to say, "and never makes any noise." He did not—in my father's presence; but sometimes, when his back was

The child was long in coming. Young Martyn put his two hands on my shoulders, and looked down at me from his height; then he stooped and kissed me thrice—on my hair, on my forehead, on my lips—and said vehemently that he loved me, and would marry me, and that he hoped I understood. I did understand; and retreated precipitately (but only a little way) from this first attack—being quite unprepared for battle. I had known for some time that he cared for me. I do not believe much about girls not being able to see that. But I had not in the least expected a declaration. I was only sixteen; and I thought that perhaps some day, when I was old enough to marry, James Martyn might ask me to be his wife—if he had not long before got over his fancy, and married some other woman nearer his own age. For, although young Martyn was then only two-and-twenty, to me he always looked and seemed much older than his years—for which I liked him the more.

I had thought a great deal of James Evered Martyn before this. He was a part of our life; and, moreover, had begun to appear to me in the pleasant light of a lover. But I had built no serious hopes on the issue of his attachment.

I retreated, as I have said, confused, before the first onset. Nevertheless, when Agatha appeared—she having gone down to the Burn by the Church-yard path, and, not finding us there, returned to the house to seek us—we were plighted lovers. I, a young, warm-hearted, ignorant, motherly child, had promised to be the wife of the wise and gifted, the gentle and great-hearted James Evered Martyn.

We all went down to the Burn together, we three, all

gleeful and careless, and two of us happy, so happy, in the glamour of our first young love. As we went, Agatha's sweet child-voice sang snatches of "Douglas, Douglas, tender and true," and I "heard and not heard," and let the cruse of my youthful gladness unheeded overflow.

How father laughed when James told him about it all. A cloud came over young Martyn's cheery face, and a look of pride into his clear brown eyes at the sight of his amusement.

"My dear fellow," Mr. Horne said quietly, "there is no one on this earth I would choose for a son-in-law in front of you. It's Glad I'm laughing at. Let the poor, dear, good child finish her education, do!" And he burst out laughing again as loudly as ever.

This time it was I who crimsoned with vexation at the scant respect that was paid to my dignity; though I could fain have laughed in unison, I did so feel with father in my heart.

When young Martyn insisted, on the ground of my father's expressly-stated good-will, Mr. Horne looked extremely grave. I did not then know that there was some anxiety in the firm at this time on account of our affairs in China. McGuiness, our agent at Tchoo-loo, was lately dead, and it was thought that some trustworthy person should, to prevent confusion, or, I think, to repair some disorder which had already taken place, be immediately despatched to the East. Old Martyn, not willing to part from his only son, had desired to send Mr. Brown, a gentleman well known to an old friend of his own, and who had offered himself for the post. My father, I afterwards learned, had demurred to this

plan, as he not unnaturally turned to young Martyn, in whose talents and integrity he placed a confidence at once so gratifying and so just.

Thus affairs stood when young Martyn, believing that Richard Brown was appointed to succeed Mr. McGuinness in China, proposed to my father for my hand. I afterwards well understood the thought that troubled my father as soon as he found the proposal was no laughing matter with James or with me. He feared, no doubt, that, even if old Martyn could be won over, there would now be no likelihood of obtaining James Evered's consent to so dreary a banishment from the home of his lady-love. As to a speedy marriage, and my going out with young Martyn, I do not suppose the thought ever entered his head.

At last Mr. Horne consented, with a sigh, to let our engagement stand, but stipulated that it should be a long one. We were content. I, indeed, was pleased that it should be so ; and James, in his young resolution, had no doubt of being able to shorten the term of probation.

A week after the date of our engagement my father was attacked with a sudden, serious illness, from which he never wholly recovered. As soon as he began to grow better, anxious cares that had before been pressing on his mind returned with double vigour. It was my constant and painful task to watch over his convalescence. It was almost impossible to interest him in anything that was going on around us. He would sit brooding and abstracted, moving his lips with frowning brow, as if talking mentally on some perplexing theme. "What is it, dad?" I used to say, rousing him ;

and, though he always replied, "Nothing—nothing at all, my dear!" my foreboding heart too clearly answered, "China." By this time I was acquainted with the state of affairs in that quarter, and I guessed what my father's wish had been, and still was. He would never be well, we used to think, while business troubles thus weighed him down.

Young Martyn was the only one in whose society he seemed to find relief. In his weakness he confessed to James his earnest desire that he, and not Richard Brown, should have been chosen for the mission to Tchoo-loo. James told me immediately. He was pale and very grave, and it seemed as if he were searching my heart's core with his bright eyes. They could at times be stern. I did not know then how cruelly selfish it was of me to brighten up (as I am sure I did) when he told me father wished him to go to China, and to say :

"Oh, James, I knew it! What a relief it would be to him!"

"And to *you*, Gladys?"

The look recalled me: "Yes dear, if it were not for losing you."

He turned away, and I imagined him completely satisfied.

We were watching father one morning. He had dropped asleep; he looked so pale and wan. James Evered had said no more. I was wondering, would he offer to sail? I should be sorry to lose him, very sorry; but the poor thin face, so white, so drawn, so old! The burdened heart, so twice bereaved of its best earthly comforter! I hoped young Martyn would offer to sail. I even felt a little angry with

him that he had as yet said no more. I turned from father's face to his, and began to watch that—I suppose too closely; for at last James Evered said :

“ Do not look at me any more like that, Gladys, opening your big gray eyes. I know what you would have me say. Have you no thought how hard it is to me ? ”

“ Oh, James, you mean to go ? ”

I did try not to look glad, but I doubt if I succeeded. I could not help it. He loved me, and I knew it. I loved him, or I thought I did. But what does an unimpassioned baby of sixteen know of love ?

It was soon all arranged. I was very, very sorry for young Martyn, and I was sorry for myself. I am sure I shed some tears. But father was so delighted when James won old Martyn over, and promised, as time was now pressing, to set sail in six days. And I was so young, and the years would so quickly pass. I was not heartless over it. James Evered Martyn was shedding life-drops from his heart in place of the storm-tears that had made my eyes red for an hour. In some sort I was aware of this, and wondered. I knew that he did it for me. I vaguely felt how grand a thing a brave, true man may be. I was grateful, and sorry. But, oh me ! I was ungrateful, and so glad.

I saw that I grieved James Evered by my want of feeling; and I confess that I slightly resented his being aggrieved, though I would not let him perceive it. It galled me also, without my knowing why, to see him pale and stern, as if constantly setting himself to bear a great pain. I was small enough, it would seem, to chafe at the silent, unintended

reproach of an emotion strong though repressed, which, while I inwardly reprobated, I vainly essayed to prove.

The day of farewell soon came. Where was that anguish of parting that love must surely feel when about to be sundered by dreary wastes of sea, by time that cannot be measured, from the dearer being which is its life of life? In James Evered Martyn's breast. In one great loving, patient, self-devoted soul. There only. He went, and blessed me in going; warning me also, in the name of Him who blesses, to be true.

I was not quite happy for nearly a week after young Martyn set sail for the Chinese coast; but there was much to cheer me at this season in father's improved state of spirits, and, consequently, of bodily health.



CHAPTER II.

I freighted my bark with the rich and rare,
Alice of Ormskirk, all for thee.
Little I reckoned of cost or care,
But I launched her out on a summer sea.
A summer sea and a smiling sky—
Never a ripple and never a frown,
Never a token of shipwreck nigh.

* * * *

TWO years afterwards our father died. I never knew I could have missed him, as I did, till he was gone. Little as I had been to him—far less, I doubt not, than I

might and ought to have been—yet I was all he had, except the child. Since young Martyn's departure, father had found more need of me than in my life before. And the loss that fell so heavily upon me when he died was that which is perhaps, in kind, the greatest of all losses: the miss of being missed; the want of being wanted, in season and out of season—of being sought for and leant upon continually, though not always consciously—not by the natural dependence of childhood, but by the time-won confidence of a mind at once venerable and dear.

If anything could have drawn me and Agatha more closely together, it would have been the loss of our mutual friend and father. But ours was a love that is only strengthened by time, and ever sweetened by constant and closest intercourse.

A strange life we two girls led together—strangely isolated and strangely full. Agatha is like her mother—with one half of her nature. Fond of reading, till study became a passion at one time; but with her other self blithe and careless as a child. Though given to reading, too, in some measure, I have never been greedy of books and learning in the way that Agatha was.

Her face, too, is like her young mother's. Very fair, and but slightly tinged with red, with blue eyes, really blue and rarely beautiful, and soft brown hair that is somehow exactly like my own, though in all else we are different. My dark gray eyes and brown skin, warmly coloured, are the completest contrast to the soft, exquisite tinting of my child's lovely face. Agatha is taller and more slenderly built than I

am, though the outline of her form—but that is no matter : I was talking of our life.

A very quiet one it was, and we wished it no other. It was pretty well understood in the neighbourhood that the Miss Hornes did not go out. We had no wish to push ourselves forward, or even to drift into society, after father's death. Agatha, indeed, was still a child ; and what I loved best on earth, after Agatha (my absent lover not perhaps excepted), was the face of Nature, shining in that spot of beauty in which I lived and revelled. None can ever understand what that home is to me—in what voices, peculiar to the haunt, the sea is ever speaking to me there ; sometimes like spirit-words from an absent friend, sometimes like a message of peace or power from a holier land ; never silent ; never saying things unheeded to a heart that, whether it mourns or rejoices, whether it is pensive or merry, whether it repents or looks forward, always turns for strength or sympathy to the grand, ever-changing melody of the restless, restful deep—and, I think, without idolatry, believes she finds it there.

The few friends we had who cared for us were welcome in our home, and we were glad if they would sojourn with us there from time to time. The natural beauties of the spot, its simple pleasures, the unbroken serenity, the happy freedom of our life, these were such gifts as we had to offer. Freely we had received, and, though not courting society, to give such our hearts were freely open to all who valued them.

But oftenest we two were alone together. When Agatha's

governess left her, the child took to reading with double assiduity and vigour. Many a summer afternoon—so many that it seems to me, looking back to such, as if life had been always summer for a time—we used to sit in the shade of the laurels bordering the lawn, the broad sea lying blue and calm before us in the sunshine, while Agatha devoured her books of history or science (philology being her favourite one—and the dear child had much ado to speak ten consecutive words of her mother-tongue with grammatical propriety), and I sat sewing, and watching my studious sister, growing so learned and so fair, and looked out to sea, and listened to the gentle plashing on the beach, and drank the warm loveliness of earth and sky, and dreamed and built castles to my heart's content.

I shame a little when I think what a secondary part in those airy dreams James Evered Martyn used to play. You see he was too young for me now. I had grown past him. For, although I reasoned against it, it was with us as with Gabriel and Evangeline. I could not think of him as different to what he was when we parted. Young Martyn was young Martyn still to me, and even younger than he had seemed before. When I was sixteen I had felt him to be as far removed from me in years as he was in wisdom and worth. Now, when I looked back to him as he then was, I recalled a very young man, ardent and fresh in the untried vigour of his youth, whom I had already passed on the road of life by absolute counting of years, and, I supposed, by the development which comes with time, even when not much aided by experience.

This feeling had gained on me in the latter years of his absence. James Martyn's return had been regularly postponed for six months every year from the time first fixed for it, which was a date of three years from his arrival at Tchoo-loo. Five times it was thus deferred, so that he had been gone between eight and nine years when I had the long looked-for, now almost unexpected, letter which told me he was really coming home. All this time James had written to me by every mail.

The ocean on which was launched the bark of James Evered Martyn's love seemed now to be full and fair. Rich and costly, a good man's best, was the cargo that vessel was freighted withal. I do not think the loyal heart wavered once in all that time. *Think!* I should be mad to doubt about a change in him.

It was pleasant to me to think of, and, in a certain way, to look for my absent lover. Yet I was serene. I cannot recall any vivid imaginings of future happiness drawn from my thoughts of him. It was nice to know that he was coming; it would be no nicer, that I knew of, when he came. So I went on building those airy castles, that I am a little ashamed of now. Sometimes in them young Martyn would prove faithless, and turn to some younger, fairer bride, more suited to that image of himself which I chose to retain in my memory unchanged. In the old days, before our engagement, my imaginary rival was wont to be mature. Now that I seemed to have passed him by, I would regard him as a lad, good and true, and of a fair promise, but not ripe to win a woman's serious regard—conscious all the while of the

absurd incongruity of such a thought. But, when his supposed unfaithfulness had left me free to choose among the heroes of my mind's eye one who should be grand and grave enough, and of a sufficiently high order of intelligence, to mate with a person of my enlarged understanding and generally exalted views, I was usually smitten with remorse; and, to avoid taking my own true love for a hero, would cut him altogether out of the field—that he should not, at least, have a pitiful part assigned to him—and indulge in bootless visions of a life in which he had never had a share. Let the old day-dreams, confessed in their worthless folly, rest in peace.

It was Agatha who evinced the most excitement when we received the news that James Martyn was coming home at last. I think she could scarcely remember him, but the interest she took in us was wonderful. As the time for his arrival drew near, she grew half wild with impatience, and was seldom composed enough for half an hour at a time to be making historical notes, or diving deep in the mysteries of derivation.

She flew down the lawn one day to meet me as I came home from a walk, in her best white frock, the one she specially affected, crying out that I should guess what had come in my absence.

“The parcel from Mudie's, dear?”

“*Mudie's!*” with immense contempt; yet how she would count on the coming of that box! “It's a big tin case—from *China!*” she added, in a burst of delight that ended in kisses on my lips.

"Oh, Glad! aren't you happy? *I am.*"

"Of course, dear; but do you mean that he is come?"

"Oh, no," says Agatha, her face falling a little, for she fears to disappoint me; "but the box is here, so he must have landed, you know."

Yes, he had doubtless landed, and would be here to-day. "Good-bye to waiting and uncertainty, to doubts and fears, and—liberty!" said the voice of the sea, wailing a little in its song of Welcome Home.

"Oh, Gladys, do go at once and change your dress! You don't know how soon he may be here!"

"Why should I change my dress, Agatha?"

"Why, it's so dismal, dear, for James to come home and find you dressed for a funeral."

We had reached the house, and I had thrown my white broad-brimmed hat on to a chair. I had on a black silk dress; some wild flowers I had gathered during my walk and tucked into the front of it had been scattered by Agatha's embrace, leaving one dark green frond of fern. A knot of crimson ribbon in my hair was the only bright colouring in what Agatha called my dismal costume; yet, having given a glance at myself in the looking-glass after this verdict, I remarked quite sincerely that I thought I should do very well. And Agatha admitted that the black dress suited me, only it ought not to be black to-day; and that the red ribbon lighted up what she was pleased to call my "sombre beauty" very well. She had herself forgotten some tie, or belt, or bow, and now hurried away to repair the omission. I could not help laughing a little at my fair young sister, so eagerly

and innocently adorning herself to receive my expected lover.

When she was gone I strolled out again through the verandah, crushing the dark myrtles as I passed (such a little thing to remember !), and gathering their odour from my sun-browned hands. On past the shadow, and down the sunny lawn. It was a brilliant July day, but a pleasant breeze was stirring. All over the blue sea there were light white wreaths of foam. Having reached the end of the sward, I sat down in the sunshine, enjoying the fresh sweet air. The grass was longer on the slope, which was separated from the upper lawn by a narrow gravel-path. We did not care to have it so regularly tended here. Clover scented the air. Many a pretty wild flower had started up among the sun-burnt blades. Brown and blue butterflies were flitting restlessly above and around them. A little flock of starlings flecked the lawn not far from where I sat, glossily shining in the sun. The white gulls flapped and floated over the purple deep. The voice of the sea spirits had not lost its wail.

I was thinking of James, and wondering when he would be here. We were not far from the southern port where he had landed. The tin case had come by the carrier's cart from our nearest railway-station, but no message had been sent with it.

I did not feel uneasy. I expected to hear from or to see James Martyn soon. Agatha flitted down once to tell me she was going to gather strawberries for tea. She was sure she remembered that James was fond of strawberries. I believe this was a flight of fancy which supplied her with

something to do; but children's memories are retentive of small things.

I declined Agatha's invitation to the strawberry-beds. How pretty she looked in her added blue ribbons, that might vainly seek to shame her bluer eyes. I remember it was the day after Agatha's birthday. She was just sixteen. "Take *twoo*, Taffy; *take* two!" cooed a wood-pigeon softly, as the sweet child wandered away; and I, laughing, answered it aloud: "Poor James cannot take two, my turtle-dove; perhaps he had better take little Agatha—she will exactly suit him."

I looked lazily out to sea, and then nearer home, at the shore-path that wound round the low cliff just beneath. A gentleman with a long beard was coming towards me up the path. I did not know him or heed him much. When he came to the little-wicket gate that leads into our domain, he pushed it open and came in. I regarded him. He was a stranger to me, and I did not for an instant think of James. I bent forward with the intention of politely giving the gentleman to understand that the grounds were private (mistakes having often occurred as to this matter), when he took two or three quick steps towards me, opened his arms, and laughed the low laugh of unmistakable joy. He had known me in a moment. He took me home to his faithful heart, half lifting me to my feet before I had time to rise. He spoke, but brokenly, for he was deeply moved:

"Gladys! My own again! My true, *true*, dearest one!"

Alas! alas! it is what he called me. Did I hear no

echoes of the old sweet song the child had carolled so lightly
“in the sweet summer-tide long ago?”—

I was not half worthy of you, Douglas !
or—

Mine eyes were blinded : your words were few.

Now, indeed, I must waken from my dream. Young Martyn had vanished, and in his place had come a bronzed and stately stranger, slightly bald, with a big brown beard. The steady brown eyes looked, when the mist had cleared, the same as of old. That was all. I did not know him in the least. Even the broad, intellectual forehead had acquired an air of added grandeur and command. I could not blend the two faces into one. I looked at my promised husband, and the old face faded from me as I looked. Young Martyn was no more. I felt chill and lonely. In passing away he had carried with him, though my heart did not yet acknowledge it, the last clinging tendril of my girlhood's frail romance.

There had been a tender idyl in my life nine years ago. I had clung to it, after a fashion, and thought that I was true.

I believed that aught my love had lost during his absence would return to it when my lover had come home. The foolish thought that he would now be too young for me did sometimes come to trouble me ; but I had been trying lately to reason it away. Time was alike for us both. Besides, he would charm away the effect of years, and I would be as young as ever again, for him, when he returned. He never

did return. And here was a gentleman, sufficiently mature, and lofty enough in mien to be a hero, not too young for me, indeed ; but, alas ! he was unknown.

And how did it fare with James ? He had left me an undeveloped maiden of sixteen ; he found me a woman of five-and-twenty. Well, but his heart was unaltered. What mattered any difference in me ?

That is how God must love us, when you come to think about it.

I have spoken from my later knowledge. For a weary while I battled with the thought that I loved James no more. How I have reasoned with, and preached to, and scolded my poor self about my coldness and unrest ! What did I want ? I asked myself. What could be more worthy of the love of a better woman than this man, true and faithful-hearted, high-minded, clever, gentle, and brave ? That he was all this I suspected, and the truth grew upon me from day to day. His letters also might have prepared me for himself. And yet at last I was forced to confess it to myself, I did not love him.

Could it be only that his face was changed ? That, though in all things such a lover as had often wooed me in my dreams, the paltry hindrance of his having at last confronted me as a stranger, assailing my face with the unexpected bristles of his beard, made it impossible for me to give my heart up to his keeping, or to rejoice in being honoured with the dower of his own ?

It might be so. Reason availed not, and to clamour was idle folly. Vain was it also to say, "I *will* be true." I said it many times, but it brought no comfort. How did I

long in my weary disappointment—ay, with an inexpressible longing—for the quiet days of bygone peace and waiting.

And none might share my trouble ; least of all he who was its source. I shrank from the shame of saying “ I am false ; ” but I did shrink also from the fear of hurting him.

Things were far gone when I found out that the pure spirit of my cherished sister, who had been almost my child, had gone out unsuspectingly to meet the nobility of a soul that I could honour but not love, and surrendered its gracious young affection to one who had nothing to offer in return.

I had begun to prepare my wedding things. I was weary at heart, but I entirely purposed to go through with it. Agatha was delighted with the business of preparation ;—I mean that I was blind enough to think so.

One day I had been trying on a pretty dress that pleased her fancy much. It was white, I remember, and looked bridal in itself. I was so tired of it all. Indeed, by this time I was ill with doubting about how I ought to act, all the while knowing what I fully meant to do, and with keeping up appearances to James, whom I could have welcomed sincerely as a friend, but towards whom it was almost impossible to bear myself as a promised bride. However, it is not the true that are prone to suspect the false. James was satisfied, and even radiant ; which annoyed me a little, as it had once done to stand apart and watch his lonely sorrow. I had not wept with him then, nor could I rejoice with him now. I hoped that, when all the worry of making ready and the bustle of expectation were over, we might settle down, and things would go well. It was a hope at which I sometimes shuddered, too.

I hurried out of the fair white garment, letting it fall to the floor.

"Oh, Glad, take care!" says Agatha, plaintively, and gathering it tenderly up.

"Agatha! Agatha! I *wish* it were all for you."

It was the first time I had consciously given the least glimpse of my full heart. Some one says that a woman's mask is only a modest veil that kind Nature teaches her to drop over some weakness and much strength. I do not know. But we had hidden our hearts till then even from one another, though they were brimming over with mutual love and trust; and it was not now of our own seeking that they were in part laid bare.

Agatha did not answer me, at least with her lips. But oh, the face of my darling!—that face whose lightest look was legible to me. Love, sorrow, pride, deprecation, doubt, even reproach—I saw and felt them all, though I did not till afterwards separate them in my thoughts.

"*Agatha!*"

"Hush!" she cried out, angrily. "You shall not speak."

And I said, "No, dear," with entire submission.

Then she came and clasped me round the neck. "Gladys, my dearie! My best old girl!" she said; "*I didn't mean to look like that.*"

It was so childish in its pathos that I had just strength enough left to laugh a little, as I put up my face to give her the assurance of my silence in a kiss.

But here was a dismal complication! What was now to be done? If James would only have fallen in love with

Agatha when he came home, instead of being "ower true" to me! I almost thought I would ask him if he did not think he would like to transfer his affection to little Aagsie, as he used to call her still. It had occurred to me before. I had inquired of him once if he did not see how lovely she had grown. "She is very pretty," he had answered, coolly. He seemed to regard her much in the old way—as a pet, a plaything, a child. Yet she was now as old as I had been when he first loved me. On reflection, however, I decided that I would sooner marry James Evered Martyn than offer him an insult.

But how hard it seemed that I should interpose my burden between Agatha and the sun. That the keeping of a promise, given long years ago by a girl whose being I could scarce identify with mine, should constrain me to be false to the instinct of my unbroken love for her! I could not bear it.

I did not fail to reflect that Agatha's young love could not for a moment balance the scale against the devotion tried and true of the heart that I had won. Looking on her in the light of personal experience, I did not regard the love or the *Liebe-schmerzen* of the little one as likely to endure. But, then, this affection was all she had to give; and I was to drive it back upon her gentle heart, and make her suffer pain. All her life I had done what I could to shield her from the lightest ill. It was as if a *mother* should take away her young girl's love, and marry him!

I scarcely dwelt at all upon the knowledge that James, if I gave him up, would be no more to her. I only longed not

to take my darling's good, and wear it as a weary load upon my life. To one of my nature also (I am aware of contradictions in it) there was an added sting, in the thought that I should do this cruel thing without reward—that the treasure was no treasure to me which I must steal from her. True, it was mine long first. But—if I could only give it up to her now!

I did not sleep that night. "I have no one on earth to help me!" It was my moan till the morning. I felt that I was motherless, for the first time, at five-and-twenty. I should not have felt it now, perhaps, only the nature of this sorrow compelled me to such utter loneliness. "No one on earth to help me. No one—no one!" I certainly knew there was help elsewhere. I asked for it, and it came. But, oh me! God's angels sometimes come in strange disguise.



CHAPTER III.

What did it matter? The bark went down.

JAMES, you might have told me you had grown a beard in Tchoo-loo!"

"I might certainly have told you, Gladys, amongst other trifles. Have you any objection to it, dear?"

"No. But perhaps I should have known you if you had not had a beard."

"Well, never mind;" he answers, gently. "You know me now."

"No, I do not!" I say, ungraciously. "I don't remember you."

A shade came over his face, enough for me to notice, but he did not answer. We were in the garden together. It was within a month of the time fixed for our marriage. I think, on looking back, that I had grown less kind to him as the weeks went on, especially since I had more than suspected how dear he was to my sister. Perplexity and wretchedness came between me and all peace in his companionship, and I seem to have sought a grievance in his every act or omission. Even this trifle of the beard recurs to my memory as one of those unworthy pretexts which served me as occasions of complaint.

"Gladys," says James, after a silence, "I wish you would take little Agsie away for a change; she looks wretchedly thin and pale. You know, darling, I must go to Manchester about that tiresome business. Suppose I took you to Hastings, or somewhere, and left you there for a fortnight? I could fetch you when I came back. Do! It would do you good."

"James, I am perfectly well. You worry me."

"Is Agsie well?"

I have called my tale a history. History lays herself out to be veracious. I do not suppose that any who read this one will approve of me; but I would gladly have shaken him when he composedly asked me that! Was Agatha well? Indeed, she was not. As for me, I was sick enough with

the trouble and contention of half-a-dozen emotions, all equally harassing and devoid of comfort. And who was the cause of it all? And he sat there, seeming to reprove me for my want of thought for her! I believed I disliked him at that moment, though I well knew how guiltless he was. Oh, had I not better tell him all at once, and so end it—all about myself, and how changed I was; how I had grown false, and unloving, and thankless; how all his patient love and long-abiding faith were as nothing to the empty, fickle-hearted woman he had stooped to care for? Should I not tell him this? I could not. He trusted me. I could not shame him so.

James Evered had his way about our leaving home for a short while before the wedding. He did not say much on the matter; and yet we went at his bidding. He usually got what he had set his mind on, after one manner or another. Nine years ago it had taken him, on one occasion, short space and little effort to bend me and father to his will. How soon I had to give way to the passion of his first address! How easily father succumbed to the pressure of the young man's calm insistence!

As I objected to Hastings, it was arranged to shorten our journey; and we just crossed over to the fair little island that lies nearly opposite our home. Here James Evered left us, hopefully, and with no foreboding. His bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne—and with as little reason as did Romeo's. In that cheerful parting he rang his "ain deid bell"—that farewell was the requiem to what he valued dearly as his life.

The absence of my lover was such real deliverance from pain—such a nameless weight was lifted by his going from my over-burdened heart, that before he had been gone two days I had resolved that, when next he returned to me as my promised husband, it should be for the last time.

The relief I felt when he had left me seemed a revelation. I knew now that, for his good fully as much as for my own, it would be right to annul our engagement. I was able to determine upon doing so when freed from the unconscious pleadings of his presence.

I did not think my conduct would be either cowardly or false. On the contrary, I regarded the course I was about to take as the truest and bravest it was now left open to me to pursue. I knew that I longed for freedom: so far the measure was selfish. But, again, how I shrank from the terrible act of undeceiving the man who had put his trust in me! Yet I bent my will to the trial with unswerving resolution; renewing my purpose day by day, lest I should falter at his presence when the time had come. I knew what the effort would cost me; but, for his sake, no less than for my own, it must be made. In the name of Truth, I must lay bare my falsehood. For honour's sake, I must disclose to him that I was void of honour. Oh, but it was hard to wound him so! It was wofully hard to make him feel ashamed that he had loved me. It was most hard to be worthy of that shame. I did love truth so much! I had believed that falsehood never would be reckoned among the many faults of Gladys Horne. But for the thought of Agatha, I might yet have forced myself to keep troth with

him. I would have gone through anything, I used to think at times, rather than say to my heart, "Lie there—in the dust, before James and before Conscience—and be counted an unworthy thing!"

So that the burden my own will laid upon me soon became heavier to bear than the oppression of companionship that should have been communion, and the daily restraint of a presence that ought to have been dear.

Agatha was really ailing. We had been a week in the island, appreciating its beauties, and appearing to enjoy them—actually enjoying them, perhaps, with that half of the conscious being which often stands apart from our inner self, receiving with pain or pleasure the impress of outward accidents that mingle strangely with the deepest realities of life, yet have no bearing on the mainspring of its sorrow or its joy. Surely, those which we count for hours of happiness are not all filled with enjoyment. Nor is that all endurance which we prove in seasons of pain.

On the eighth day of our sojourn Agatha told me she was much better. She would so like to go home! she said; and the weary droop of her pretty head, as she gave way to the last aspiration, sufficiently contradicted the cheer of her previous words.

"Agatha, come and sit near me! I want to tell you something."

She settles herself beside me on a rustic seat, under a tree, in the little garden of the pretty house where we lodge. It is late in the season now. The clear-voiced robins remind us to make much of the passing hour. But summer, deep-

tinted, rich with a maturity that verges on decay, still lingers in the balmy noontide of the early autumn days.

"Agatha, I have made up my mind."

"About going home, Glad?"

"No, dearest, about my engagement. I shall break it off."

"Gladys, you can't. You cannot." She speaks without apparent surprise or emotion, in a low, emphatic tone, that is unusual with her.

"I *must*, Agatha!"

"Tell me why?"

"I don't love him."

"I knew it," she says, with a little shiver. She knew it. Of course she had felt for him that my heart was unloving. Oh, why had he been so blind?

"But, Gladys——"

"There is no use in talking to me, Agatha! It is as sure as death that I shall never marry him." That is what I said, and Agatha felt and understood the tone of my speaking.

We sat for some moments silent. I could not see, or would not seek, her face. Then I said, "Are you glad?" I don't know what made me say it.

"*Glad!*" says she, looking up at me, and drawing my gaze to hers. "No, Gladys," in a low, sad tone, and with a sigh on lips and in her eyes that goes to my heart's core, "I am not glad; I am very, very sorry. It will break his heart."

Is no one to be glad of this business? As I looked and listened, I felt that *I* had never, in the first days of our

engagement, so lost myself in him. And I sat wondering hazily if, were it all to come again, with Agatha in place of me, she would urge with silent importunity the immolation of her lover, inciting him with the forceful pleading of beloved eyes to the long pain of a weary separation. She would not have done so, I considered, even to gratify a failing father's whim.

She got up presently and stood before me, piteously entreating me with word and look. Was she, then, a child ; or was it the faithful heart of a woman looking at me out of earnest eyes ?

"Gladys !" she said ; "oh, listen, my dear sister ! This has been through me. But if I have said, or done, or *looked*"—and the colour flushed in her pale cheeks—"anything to make you act like this, forget it, dear. I did not mean it. *Don't* do it, old woman—don't be cruel, Gladys ! Oh, you *can't* be cruel !"

But I could. When I spoke it was with little feeling, with nothing responsive in my voice or words :

"I told you, Agatha, because the secret was no good. I thought it might make it a little easier for you to know. It has made it harder. It can make no other difference."

She turned away in silence, kindly, I understood. She divined in some measure how I suffered. Her young heart was too full of its own sorrow to be very pitiful to mine ; but she forgave me my denial. She could not know all it cost me,—but she guessed in part ; and I felt that she would entreat no more. We never spoke of James again, in any serious relation, till he came to take us home.

When that day arrived I was prepared for it. But James was so utterly unprepared, so blindly, so self-confidently—nay, but, rather, so true-heartedly—unwarned of any lapse in me, that I had to submit on our first meeting to a caress, the receiving of which was equally revolting to my sense of candour and distasteful to my existing frame of mind. I was more than ever determined to put an end to it all at once.

We were neither of us the better for the change, James decided presently. He could not tell, he declared, which face was the thinner and more worn. I was more changed, he thought, in the last fortnight than I had been in the nine years he was away before.

In truth we both of us suffered ; both of us through and for him ; each of us also for herself. Mine was the bitter sting of self-abasement and humiliation. It was not that I had acted wrongly in some given instance—an event common enough for conscience to contemplate. It was the *state of wrong* that appalled me, the being false and unworthy, and the shame of having to reveal it. I recoiled, trembling, from the deed. I firmly resolved not to delay it. I hated myself. I was not a little provoked with James Martyn : his honour was a thing above my reach ; but I felt it might fall upon and crush me.

I had reflected also that the action to which I stood self-committed was one that would be almost universally condemned. I was about to jilt a man who was pre-eminently good and true. I believed I should be acting as justly as it was now in my power to do ; but experience taught that the voice of the majority would be against me. My world was

small, and I had not many to judge me; but I felt what would have been the verdict of all who might have had occasion to try my guilt. A man in my place would fear to be dishonoured by the course which I contemplated. And should not I earn the same reproach? Undoubtedly, but the reproach was better than the alternative.

All this I had considered and reconsidered, and the doing so had reduced me to a state of abject misery by the day of James Evered's return.

And if Agatha suffered on her own part as well as on his it was doubtless from the pang of a wounded love. But I think the sweetness of that young romance may have almost outweighed its pain. I think (but I did not consider it all at that time) the foundation of her sorrow in regarding the outrage that James was about to endure through me was a strong affectionate regard which he duly returned, after his kind. All other feeling—all that demanded a response he would never bestow—all that was thrown back on her heart, to be the source of more selfish repining—was the foam of the torrent, the white passion-froth on the stream of an untried existence, made more apparent by the force of the under-current of esteem and affection, but bodiless, evanescent—a graceful adorning, to be lightly discarded, rather than the incoming tide of a pain that should overflow and endure.

Within an hour of James Evered's arrival at Shanklin I signified to Agatha that she might leave us together. She threw on me one last look of unavailing appeal, and left us to our fate.

"James," I said, speaking curtly through intense agitation,

"I will speak at once, if you please. I see no use in delay. I have something to tell you that——"

"But won't you sit down, Gladys?" he asked, a little surprised, no doubt, by my demeanour, but so wofully unprepared. I was standing with clasped hands before the large arm-chair in which he had been lounging since tea was over, seeming listless and well content, now and then gazing half sleepily out at the distant sea-view, and looking, I could but feel, as if he found it very good to be here.

"No, thank you," I answered. "My place is at your feet; but——"

"*Your* place, Gladie!" he interrupted, in smiling reproof. "Your place is in my heart, my dear. What is it, little woman? Something troubles you."

He stretched out a large kind hand and drew me to the side of his chair, not otherwise moving. The touch and tone were almost fatherly. He looked at me with gentle eyes, inviting a full, clear, and trustful confidence. But the power of coherence fled as he regarded me. I broke down utterly. The torture of the past few months, the agony of resolution of the two last weeks, burst forth at last in sobbings, selfish and unrestrained. But I did not pause in my intent. As often as I could I spoke through my vain, weak weeping:

"James, I want—not to marry you! It's very strange, I know; but—I don't quite love you; not as I ought, when—not as you—*not at all*, you know! It is so wicked and thankless. It is so false and abominable. It is so shameful, so horribly, wickedly untrue! But never mind. You couldn't

know—how *could* you tell—I was so utterly unworthy and beneath your caring for me? How should *you* understand there was no good in *me*?—no good?”

I was thoroughly unstrung. I found myself eagerly offering consolation to James Martyn for his having stooped to crown me with his love. Of all the many forms in which I had mentally anticipated this meeting, not one had been approximate to the reality. I had known I should have no excuse to offer him. The one poor excuse that I could tender to myself was Agatha, and her name might not be mentioned. But I had never imagined myself prostrate before him, sobbing out self-accusings, and hiding my tear-bathed face upon his knees. Such had been my attitude since he had drawn me to his side, quietly asking me the cause of my trouble. Compelled by his tender gaze, I had instantly dropped his hand and slid to the ground at his feet. From that position I was now recalled by a voice I did not know.

“*Are you sure, Gladys?*” said the voice.

I was miserably, sickeningly sure. “Oh, *quite!*” I answered, not yet daring to regard him. I rose, however, to my feet, and when I did look at his face I stood dismayed. How could his eyes have grown hollow in a minute’s space? But they had to my vision, and black shadows lay beneath them, and the lines of age had gathered on his broad, smooth brow, and his cheeks were deadly pale. “A long while,” he whispered without stirring, still leaning back in his chair and looking away from me. There was almost an eternity of expiation in the minute I then endured—between the con-

fession of my sin and its absolution by the man whom I had wronged. He spoke again :

“You could not think of this nine years ago ?”

“No ! no ! no !” I said impatiently, too exhausted to protest that I had loved him then. But I suppose my tone was a reminder.

“Well, well !” he went on, in the same low voice—in a sort of dead voice, if such a thing could be—“eight years ago ? Five years ago ? Half a year, Gladys Horne ?”

“Oh, James ! I did think of it ; but not till you came home.” I felt him look at me then. “Since that I have thought, and thought, and thought, and had no rest. But I could not speak till now. I tried to think it was not true—to think it could not be.”

Yes, he was looking at me now. Perhaps the misery he saw in the face he had loved so long and dearly moved him to quit the reproach, few-worded but poignant, of his former tone. He got up and came to me. He laid his hand on my trembling shoulder, coolly, without caress, not facing me, but standing side by side, with his right hand on the arm nearest my heart.

“Poor woman !” he said, “you are painfully distressed for me. Take courage. You have done well. You might have trusted me sooner ; but you do well in this. I am going.”

His voice was not tender, though gentle, and it froze me to the soul. It did not seem as if it could have come to *me* from *him*. We know not, till it is broken, what habit does for us. I was so used to being cherished by his love.

But this was infinitely better than that first appeal. Moreover, it left, as, of course, he knew it would, peace behind it in the assurance that he thought I had done well, though late, to undeceive him. He turned to leave me. He walked slowly and silently to the door of the little room. I watched him. No farewell ; not a word, not a look, he cast behind. I thought it was hard to let him go like this. Though he told me nothing, I could see and feel what I had done. Yet I scarcely know what impulse moved me ; I believe it was the thought that I might give him something, having taken all ; but I stopped him when his hand was on the door. " James ! " I said. He turned and looked at me with a set face, in which there was as little of sternness as of any other feeling—that is, none. He did not speak.

" James," I repeated, gasping, " will you like to kiss me once before you go ? "

" No, Gladys." That was his answer. Then he added, " Never again, God help me ! " and was gone.

I knew what I had done. The knowledge would have gone nigh to vanquish me, but for that rebuff. I scarcely shame to own that my woman's pride suffered a momentary sting. I had offered him my lips, and they had been rejected. It was but a slight relief, that shadowy grievance ; but it did draw one or two thoughts away from the contemplation of my own disgrace and the havoc I had wrought for him. That other real relief of being free had not yet had time to touch me. The present crisis reached the horizon of my mind's eye. This, then, was how it stood. I had laid waste a true man's hope. I had done worse—I had made for him

a desolation of the past. I had cast under foot a great, strong, sweet, enduring love, causing the heart that held it to bleed with a wound which might never be healed. And thus far he whom I had injured was avenged on me—he had refused to kiss me when he went away.



CHAPTER IV.

She will weep her woman's tears,
She will pray her woman's prayers,
Toll slowly !
But her heart is young in pain,
And her hopes will spring again
In the sun-time of her years.

AFTER James had left me, Agatha was really ill; she was laid up for two or three weeks with a sort of low fever, of doubtful origin.

As soon as some rather troublous business with regard to the apartments—owing to our landlady's refusing during a tedious interval to believe, on the testimony of two experienced medical men, that Agatha's disease was not catching—had been disposed of, I wrote to our only near relation (who was none to Agatha, being my mother's sister), and she came to us at once.

With the arrival of Miss Margaret Watson began my minor trials concerning our broken engagement. The first thing she asked, as soon as she had seen Agatha, was about James. "Where was he?" "How was he?" "What was

to be done about the wedding, if Agatha were not recovered before it seemed likely at present?" Aunt Margaret had taken a great fancy to James: she had been with us a little while this summer during his sojourn near Burnside. I told my story in as few words as I could, without mentioning Agatha's name. But Miss Watson was too much for me.

"I know all about it," says she, with a nod of her head towards the open door of the sleeping invalid's room. "But *he* didn't care for *her* a bit," adds my shrewd Aunt Magsie.

"No, indeed," I answer sadly, thinking it might have wounded my vanity, but would have rejoiced my heart's heart if he *had* cared for her.

"Bless you, my dear," says Aunt Margaret presently, "it was only a guess, you know"—a guess she had caused me to verify unwittingly by allowing it to pass unchallenged. "But it won't go deep. You needn't have done it, Gladys! *That* never gave her a fever!"

I had not supposed it did, unassisted. I only answered, "It was on my own account, Aunt Margaret, and on James Martyn's. I did not care for him enough to be married."

"He was a very nice young man," was Aunt Margaret's comment—the only one she made; but I feared it was one I should have to hear and see repeated, in one form or other, by many lips and many eyes among those who must be faced on our return.

Fortunately for me, the little storm of public opinion burst in my absence. Agatha was not sufficiently well for us to return till a fortnight after the time that had been fixed for the wedding. Friends had therefore to be told of her

illness, and were made acquainted from a distance with the fact that a wedding was no longer in prospect.

It was well for me, also, that we took Aunt Margaret home with us. There was comfort in her saving presence at the first meetings with those acquaintances whose interest in our little history was keen and unsympathetic.

But my halting record must pass over details, and hurry on to the two last acts in our life-drama. These were divided from each other by a considerable space of time. The first took place exactly one year and five months after I lost James.

As soon as Agatha recovered, she seemed to me brighter and prettier than ever; a fairer, fresher sight to gladden weary eyes. But for me, when we got to Burnside, some bloom was off the butterflies, metaphorically speaking. In reality, the butterflies themselves had gone where the butterflies go; the autumn foliage had lost its splendour and wore congenial tints of sober, dull decay. Only the glorious, changeful sea "remained unchangeable."

The fact was that the glamour of youth, which had grown up and flourished in me along with a certain premature womanliness, caused by the early deaths of my mother and step-mother, and which had survived my father's loss and lasted far into actual womanhood, had passed away from me now. I let it go very quietly. I believe we always do; and wisely. It is not an unmixed good—or would not be if it abode continually. It is not fitting for even the spirit of the human to be always young, until this mortal put on immortality.

I was sad for a while, I own ; but who could be dismal long, for such cause as I then had, with a buoyant young life beside them, gladdening in the strength and freshness of renewed vitality ?

Our life had soon returned to its former even flow. A few changes occurred in our little parish. Our kind young vicar died, and was succeeded by a middle-aged gentleman addicted to revolution, who brought his own curate with him, thereby effecting a second change long before we could recover from the first. It is no longer open to me to regret the advent of these gentlemen, even in thinking of him who died so young, so good, and so endeared.

Then Captain Hervey married and left the county : that caused a blank in our little circle. He and his sister had been two of the most welcome among the few well-prized friends who now and then made a fleeting sojourn at Burnside. Miss Hervey, who was and is a most agreeable woman, is many years older than her brother : she remained to us ; only, as it naturally happened that our acquaintances were mostly feminine, the marriage of Captain Hervey was the loss of a pleasant and rarer element in our small society.

I do not recall any other great change, except that Agatha left off some of her reading not long after Mr. Eden's death, and took to practising the organ,—I think at the suggestion of our new curate, the Rev. Langmore Dickens.

"Little Agsie has music in her eyes," James Evered used to say. We certainly got it through her fingers as she sat up there playing far into the dusky twilight of the early winter days, with Langmore (who had grown to learn more

than he could teach, he told us) sitting in the shadow at her side, and devouring the melody of life, and love, and Händel, as it swelled and softened through the glorious organ-pipes. But this was in the second winter after James had left us; and I have not yet related the event which took place earlier in the year, on the 22nd of July.

That was the festival of our little church (dedicated to Saint Mary Magdalene). We had filled it as full of flowers as we could in any orderly manner—we may even have gone beyond this point,—Mr. Richards the vicar, Mr. Dickens, Miss Hervey, Kezia Luttrell, Agatha, and I. But on the morning of the festival I did not propose to review our handiwork. Agatha was a little surprised when I told her I was going down to the shore, just as she started for the church. She had been learning to play the organ for some time then, and was going to try her hand at it during the service for the first time to-day. Our organist was only disengaged on Sundays, and Agatha was likely to become a great acquisition.

So I wandered down to the shore alone, past the burn, along the white chalk-path, and down to the very border of the sea. I remember I was at peace that morning. I had heard—from the office, not through him—that James Martyn had gone back to China; and I thought that, faithful though he was while under a pledge, he would soon forget or despise me now that I had broken down that stronghold. I was not willing that he should despise me, it was not likely I should be so; but rather that, than he should suffer more through me.

I fell to thinking of him as I sat on the beach to-day. "No drizzly rain that falls on me can wash my fault away," I told the sea-gulls. But it was lightly uttered; for, in truth, my conscience was pretty well at ease, and I had begun to think that all was for the best.

Then my thoughts wandered to the church—not to St. Cuthbert's, the little temple just above me, time-worn, and relinquished to the occupation of the dead—but to the new church on the hill there away, full of life, and flowers, and music, on this morning of the festival. I thought of Mr. Richards, and the kindly interest he showed in us. I thought of Langmore Dickens, and the more than kindly interest I felt he took in one of us. I thought of Agatha, playing the new voluntary I had heard her practising so often, sitting aloft, modest and quiet, not nervous or afraid to fail—and I half wondered that I had not gone to hear.

Then I thought of the saint whose festival we kept to-day. We, I say; for might not I also have my thoughts of Heaven and her, sitting calm and lonely on the margin of the summer sea?

Service at last must be more than over, and I wondered if Agatha had yet come home. I was crooning a verse or two half aloud from some I had just been making, and had got as far as—

Cometh a vision of Mary,
The tear-washed Magdalene,
Her garments are floating near me,
Dainty, and spiced, and clean—

when I looked up suddenly, and there was Agatha, in her

white frock, crisp and fresh for the occasion, walking down the chalk-path, hand in hand with Langmore Dickens. I was not surprised. Strangely enough, the first thought that occurred to me was this:—"Here is a saint ready-made for Heaven. Here is one whose robes are yet undefiled, needing but small preparation to fit her for a seat in the great Community." Not saintly, in the sense of being more, or less, than human, was this brightly-dowered creature of my love; but in that other sense in which it has been told us of the little children, that of such is the Kingdom of God.

My second thought, as they drew near, was one of gentle acquiescent sympathy with these two happy lovers. I think I may have slightly overdone my part of *mother* presently, when things were explained between us. I caught a smile on Langmore's face when he found himself included in my maternal benedictory address. To me there was the very essence of spring about them both. Langmore Dickens was about twenty-five, a year younger than I, and Agatha had lately ended her seventeenth year. They were a well-suited and a comely pair. I felt very proud of them. Henceforth they would both in some sort belong to me.

I kept her till the following spring, and we had a happy winter all together. Agatha did in no way desert me for her lover; but, of my own seeking, I was more alone now than heretofore. During the winter afternoons, which they spent in St. Mary Magdalene's, I was generally with them, though apart—they at the organ, I in one of the chancel seats, alone, yet not alone, listening to Agatha's music and the low tones

of their voices, which kept up a frequent but, to me, wordless accompaniment.

I cannot deny that I often thought of James Martyn. It was all right, and just, and natural; but I could not refrain from the not all complacent reflection that I had been right in believing that Agatha's first romance would be but of short duration—that Aunt Margaret had spoken truly when she told me it would not cut deep. I had, of course, rejoiced in my freedom too long to regret the possession of it now. Nor had it been won with more than a secondary reference to my young sister's heart. Yet the discovery of her feelings had been the undoubted spur of my actions; without it the effort of release would never have been made. There was an element of irritation in the thought of how swiftly that sentiment had subsided, which had changed the current of two lives. Would I have had it all otherwise—even as it might have been but for me? I asked myself once or twice. I never made answer that I would. It had not come to that. But it had come to a question.

They were married in the spring. It was not a separation, they told me. But it was—not one that tears asunder the very fibres of the heart, but one that treads upon it, more or less lightly, day by day, leaving some kind of mark.

I have said that our vicar evinced a kindly interest in us two girls. Of this I was very pleasantly reassured on the occasion of Agatha's marriage. Mr. Richards did not approve of curates marrying; and, although he respected and appreciated Langmore very highly, I do not think he would have cared to retain his services after he had taken to himself a

wife, but for a most good-natured consideration for my loneliness. Calling on me the day after Langmore and Agatha had gone away, he hinted that it would be a pity should anything occur to separate me from my sister, and, I think to try me, said, "We should have you following them?" When he learned, from my manner of receiving the half-question, that on no conditions could I calmly contemplate an exile from my beloved home, he kindly said he was glad there was no fear of my desertion, and that he thought it would not be his fault if Mr. Dickens forsook us now—adding, "He is an estimable young man, Miss Horne, though mar—that is—I mean——" The vicar was slightly confused, but we laughed away his very obvious meaning with mutual good humour. I was grateful.

Langmore has not yet forsaken our little parish, throughout which most people set great store by him, endorsing the vicar's opinion of his estimable qualities. It is much to be, and to be highly thought of—as Mrs. Richards and Langmore both are—where Henry Eden was, and was adored.

CHAPTER V.

I have a sister, I have a brother,
A faithful hound, and a tame white dove—
But I had another, oh, once I had another !
And I miss him, my love, my love !

Oh, a body's sel's the sairest weicht !

HAVING reached this point in my life's history, I pause, as it were, near the summit of the hill, and look around over the valley of the past, and upward to the steep ascent of the to be. A stillness falls upon me, which I fain would keep unbroken for a while. A thick cloud hangs over the prospect, seeming to shroud it in a mist as of the blackness of darkness. Meanwhile the colours of the landscape remain unfaded and fair in the sight of all who have not climbed above the cloud.

What was there in my outwardly uneventful life at Burnside that an on-looker would regard as a disturbing influence ? Nothing. But this is not a register of events so much as a heart-chronicle ; and my heart is but too conscious of disturbance and dismay during the years which succeeded Agatha's marriage.

I am glad that all was so long undivined by her and Langmore. They both tried well and truly to make up to me for the hourly loss of her presence. They, and afterwards their children, were much with me. Again I felt like a maiden mother ; though these dear ones, happily, were not left dependent on my care.

Time, at least, did not hang heavy on my hands : with Agatha and the children to look after, I had often plenty to do. Mr. Richards, also, made many claims on my time and attention, for which I have always been thankful to him ; the more so that he has always disclaimed a disinterested intention, and really prized the small but willing service which he has accepted at my hands.

Burnside was still my home ; Elizabeth Hervey was still my friend ; the ocean still the grand and faithful recipient of the counsels of my heart.

Yet was existence emptied of delight. Yet did I come to be lonely with intensest loneliness by slow but sure degrees. Tardily, but with unerring certainty, my life became a prey to the passionate folly of regret.

In the first days I knew not whither I was tending. For a while I dwelt consciously, and with pleasure not too sad, on the thought of my old loss—the memory of James Evered Martyn. It was impossible not to think often of one whose life had been so long and closely linked with me. And, now that Agatha had left me, I suffered the thought to occupy and please my mind in constant reiteration. I may have felt that I did so with the dawning of regret ; but I was far too blind and too self-confident to see beyond the dawn. “ I wish he were here,” I said to myself sometimes ; “ I always liked James Martyn.” Then the remembrance of his faith and gentleness to me would stir a tenderer feeling in my heart, and cause me to go back on the old self-accusings and penitence nearly forgotten. In other moods I would laugh at Gladys Horne, and mock her, singing, “ Wilt thou not,

relenting, for thine absent lover sigh?" in tones of scornful pity and derision.

But was I not, in truth, relenting all the time? Did I not, in my woman's need of love, already sigh for him? Folly as it was, I did! I had not resisted the beginnings, and so, as a wise man has warned us that it should, after-remedy came too late. It was an unequal battle, now, between me and the too-insidious foe to whom I had lightly accorded a first footing in my heart. From the self-derisive chanting of Mrs. Norton's pretty love-song, I fell into the plaintive wail of a yet more touching ditty. I remember—one evening when I broke out bravely—

How did I know I should love thee to-day,
Whom that day I held not dear?
How could I tell I should love thee away,
When I did not love thee anear?

that tears of anguish filled my eyes and broke my voice, and I ended in a sob; for I loved him—I did love him—and he was far enough away by now! I stand self-committed to tell all—everything, that is, which it is possible to lay bare. I know very well that no confession on earth may be complete. I know that, having said all it can, the heart will of necessity leave more than all unsaid—so that the merely human may in no case be its judge; but what I may I will, towards a free and full avowal of the workings of my inner life. Therefore these little things seem not too small to find a place in my record of this time.

I thought of him as I had known him when I was a child

—a young lad, trusted and trustworthy beyond his years; and I honoured him in my remembrance even then.

I thought of him in his fair young manhood, when we two were plighted lovers; and in doing so recalled the golden promise of a riper day.

I thought of him as he was when we parted the first time—he heavy at heart, and I rejoicing in the sacrifice he made for me; and I saw that noble act of self-denial with a glory round it which I had not seen before—such a glory as, perhaps, I could not see till, in learning the lesson of what love might give, I came to acknowledge also what it could renounce.

I thought of those years of constancy and tenderness when division was, on his part, nothing but a name, when his spirit was untouched by the least taint of change, and he had held and cherished me in the innermost chamber of that heart which in nine long years had known no shadow of turning; and I remembered that it was this heart which I had spurned.

I thought of his returning in the strength of his maturer manhood to reclaim—as a woman's—the love of the girl whom he had won, prepared to bless her for a gift in change for which he had bestowed the costly boon of his own unsullied affection; and I maddened under the recollection of the worse than childish indifference with which I had accepted, or, more properly, endured, the offering of the pearls that were scattered at my feet.

I thought of our latest parting—of his stern and simple question, when he could not realise at first that I was *sure*—

of the consideration for me that, even in that moment, aided his pride to withdraw from all complaint, and by which he had spoken words that it would be to me a consolation to recall (for a season ; the day of their healing power was over now, and only a sting remained)—of the face that I had dared to glance at before it should become a blank to me for evermore—of the lips that had refused to kiss me—and I lived. I lived to learn the bitter meaning of half-life, when all that I cared about seemed incomplete, when every beauty needed rounding, and each harmony was unfulfilled. “That would be grand, if James could witness it!” “This would be lovable, if shared with him.” Such was the oft-repeated verdict of my lonely heart.

Constantly, violently, vainly I strove with the demon that possessed my soul. Now and again it was exorcised for a while by some sudden swelling of the ocean-voices, on which, when ready to receive it, I could place the very loftiest interpretation. But it might not be for long.

All the while that my inner life was thus divided at its root, outwardly also I went through a twofold existence—one being to my friends, another in my hours of solitude, when I gave way to the languor of a drooping spirit, and was free to let Folly have her own wild will. When Agatha or the children wanted me, or when the vicar had some errand in the village or out of it, on which it was fitting that I should be despatched, my mind, never wholly forgetting the anguish of its loss, rose sufficiently above its selfish need to be equal to the demand of the occasion, and to leave no sense of its excessive fallibility with those on whose behalf it was exer-

cised, or whose presence called for self-control. But when effort and restraint were no longer required of me—when none could see and be sorry, and none might comment or reprove—when James and I were alone together, with only the Vast Being between us, Whose presence divides not, and with Whom to be is to be most alone, then did desolation overpower me, and myself become a burden almost too heavy to be borne. For although I might feel, as a part of me, the spirit of him I loved, yet was I unsupported by the consciousness of real communion. What though my love compelled him to be present to my own inner sense? *Unless he willed it also*, he was far away.

And would he ever will to be at one with me again? It is said we find it easy to believe what we desire. To me it was impossible. I thought of James Evered as sundered from me for ever. It was my work, and I had to accept its consummation. I felt like the Ancient Mariner, on whom the retribution of his awful deed fell with a yet more terrible weight of madness and despair than had the consequences of the deed itself on those whom he had injured unto death. Do I seem to exaggerate? I cannot, perhaps, gauge the bright-eyed mariner's capacity of pain; but I am sure the measure of my own was full, during those wretched years in which I experienced the very same emotions that confounded him—remorse, the victim's dumb reproach, despair of all relief.

I was not surprised to feel that I loved James Evered now. What utterly astounded and confused me was the thought that I had never loved him faithfully before.

And where was he now? He might be married; or he might be—could the thought be borne? Was it possible that I might be living in a world in which he was not? And again, if he yet lived, how strangely strong was that invisible barrier which kept me from his side! How was it that I could not just say, "Have you forgotten me? Is there any hope of pardon for my sin?"—words that might never be uttered! The bar might be invisible, but it was strong as death. Even if he wished to forgive me (vain, foolish thought! I *knew* that he had cast me from his heart), I might not go to him to win release.

But I must learn if he still lived. It was more than five years since he went away; four since Agatha's marriage. "Four quiet, happy years," she called them. "You *are* happy, aren't you, Glad?—as happy as you would be if I were at Burnside still?"

It was far better as it was. If I had *never* been alone, I could not have borne thus much. So I answered, without hesitation, "Quite, my darling, since you are so near."

I now determined to appease or to confirm the terrible fear which had suddenly possessed me. So one morning I ordered out the ponies, and drove them over to Durling. I seldom drove alone, and I left two little ruefully-reproachful faces watching my slow ascent of the steep hill that leads from the entrance-gate. These were the faces of our two eldest boys. They were at this time three years old, being twins, and were in my opinion the biggest and forwardest lads in the county, of their age.

In about an hour's time I found myself in the post-town

of Durling, which I but seldom visited, the road to it being the least interesting of all that led from the village. I drew up at the office, where the familiar legend, "Horne, Martyn, & Horne," appeared, as of old, at the top of the bright brass bell. I tremblingly approached the door and rang. I had forgotten the present manager's name; but the porter knew me well, and asked if I wished to speak with Mr. Curd. I did, and was accordingly shown into his room. He rose to receive me, and ordered me a chair. He knew quite well who I was, though he was unacquainted with my face. He was a pompous little man, and assumed an air of condescension which might have been amusing in a moment of less agitation. As it was, we shook hands and sat down; and, as Mr. Curd did not think it needful to tell me that the morning was fair or otherwise, I plunged at once into the matter next my heart: "Had Mr. Curd heard from Mr. Martyn lately?"

"Yes, madam. We received a letter from Mr. James Evered Martyn by yesterday's post."

There was royalty in the form as well as in the manner of this address. The smallest surroundings of the moment in which its welcome tidings smote my longing ears are to me indelible. I did not know that I remarked them at the time; but I recall the very waving of the manager's hand and the shape of his signet-ring. If Mr. Curd had told me James was dead, I think I might have heard and made no sign; but to know suddenly that all the torture of my baseless fear was at an end—that my darling was alive, and had written a letter, from somewhere, at a late date—was a very

anguish of relief. I felt the blood rush over my cheeks in a new life-current of almost forgotten joy. I had some hope that Mr. Curd did not observe me. He remained unmoved. As soon as I could, I further questioned him. I learned these particulars :—James was still in China when he wrote, a month ago. He did not talk of returning. He found, so said Mr. Curd, that to keep an able head at each end (Durling and Tchoo-loo) formed the best mode of conducting the affairs of the firm. Who were the firm? I wondered. I ventured to inquire if Mr. Martyn had a partner now. No. Mr. James Evered Martyn represented the firm since the death of the late respected Mr. Martyn and that of the late respected Mr. John Horne.

I thanked Mr. Curd, and rose to go. I took leave, thinking it would be impossible for me to ask another question about James; but no sooner had I turned to quit the room than I came to a different conclusion. Once more I faced Mr. Curd.

“Do you happen to know,” I said coolly, “if Mr. Martyn is married yet?” adding the adverb, as I thought it might lead him to suppose I had cause to expect the event.

“I have reason to believe, madam,” says the little man, more pompously than ever, “that Mr. James Evered Martyn is like myself—not a marrying man.”

The remark was an absurdity. Mr. Curd must be fifty if he were a day, while James, I mentally reckoned, could be scarcely thirty-seven. I would not condescend to fence.

“He is not married, then?” I said; “and you have not heard that he is likely to marry?”

"We have received no such intimation, madam," Mr. Curd said, with more directness ; and he bowed me out.

Tchoo-loo is a long way off, and the gulf between me and James Evered was deeper than the sea ; but my heart was glad as I wended home that day—glad for a while, at least, with the sweet certainty that he yet lived—that one world, though wide, still held that precious heart and me !



CHAPTER VI.

Comment accroit-il sa richesse ?
C'est en donnant à chaque pas.

THE next thing that I remember clearly is the end—a simple one, perhaps, to those to whom this feeble record of a living, suffering, struggling heart has worn but the shadowy form and substance of a fairy-tale. On me the climax, to which life, and pain, and patience had been tending through the course of weary years, came with a startling bewilderment of unlooked-for reality that shook sense and being to their source.

After my visit to Mr. Curd two uneventful years went by that seemed like six in the passing, but about which I can recall nothing that is worth setting down. Renewed anxiety soon followed the relief I had experienced on hearing that James Evered was at least alive. The miserable weight of silence and separation soon resettled drearily upon my life. The outward circumstances of activity, beloved society, sur-

roundings beautiful and dear, though they might aid me to support, never for an hour lifted the burden of that innermost desolation from my mind and soul.

Just before the end, Agatha startled me by showing how vainly the heart may hope to bear, however silently, without casting, sooner or later, some shadow of its suffering on the surface-life.

Langmore was taking his summer holiday. He and Agatha, the two eldest boys, and the baby and nurse, were about leaving home for Paris. Douglas and my godchild, Ethel, were to remain under my care. It was the evening before their departure. I had gone round to the Hermitage (as Langmore's house is very inappropriately named), and had just come downstairs from a visit to my lads and lassie, all in their little beds. Langmore was in the study. Agatha had been in the nursery with me, but had run down rather suddenly a few minutes before. I found her alone in the dusk. It was not dark enough yet to prevent my seeing that she was crying silently, though she would have hidden it from me if she could. I did not choose to be blind, however; I was sick of inward tears, and determined to share her sorrow, if possible, whatever it might be.

"Little mother! are you not well—not happy?"

She did not hesitate to answer me, as soon as she knew that I had found her out: "Oh, Glad! I am happy enough, for *myself*. But I think sometimes—dearie, I think sometimes—that I have spoilt your life."


It came with a wail, and was followed by stormy weeping. I do not remember that I had ever seen Agatha cry before,

since she was a little child. When the passion was spent, I tried to comfort her. This I could do sincerely. I made no question of her meaning; but I laughed at the thought of her having been the source to me of aught but blessing and comfort through all her tender life. For, indeed, the trouble she had caused me once had been given as innocently as when she had sickened with a somewhat severe attack of measles in her early youth. The thought of her girlish fancy, its result, and its evanescence, had been fraught to me at one time with a little annoyance; I have confessed it. That it could ever be the ground of serious reflection upon her was impossible—absurd.

"The blame of what was done is mine alone," I said. "Mine only, Agatha! And it never can be borne by any one but me."

"*Blame, Gladys!*" says Agatha, opening her great blue, childlike eyes. "You did it all to be good and true, my dear! I know what it cost you, Glad."

I cannot deny that her simple words fell like balm on a heart that was lacerated with endless self-accusation. They even stirred the vague hope in me that I might have won, had it been possible to come within their reach, words of peace and pardon from yet dearer lips. I thought of Queen Guinevere and the stainless king (though the cases were hardly analogous), and could imagine I heard James saying, "Lo, I forgive thee, as eternal God forgives!" But, then, it was a man's forgiveness that I thirsted for—such a putting away of sin from between us two as should have made his heart my very own again. A pardon, it is true, that would have seemed to me more Godlike in that it was so human,



and on the rapturous dream of which I might not dare to dwell.

Though Agatha wiped away the unwonted tears, readily believing on my simple assurance (on which from childhood she had been accustomed to rely) that I laid no blame on any feeling or act of hers for my folly in the past, yet she remained unsatisfied. How could it be otherwise? Any attempt to convince her that I had not wasted my life indeed, and that I did not suffer from the torture of vain regret, would have seemed to me like treachery to the absent—a denial of him I loved.

“What made you think of this, Agatha?” I asked her presently.

“Well, I have often thought of it lately,” says she, evasively. Then I look at her, and she goes on: “I mean—you see, Gladys, Langmore told me he was sure there was something on your mind.”

“Did he, really?” I rejoin, not over-complacently. “He need not be troubled for me. There is always Mr. Richards, you know, if I want any counsel, ghostly or intellectual. He is a true friend, and so dependable in age and capacity.”

Certainly Agatha was hurt, and well she might be. Langmore and I are the best of friends. But really I could not help for a moment resenting his innocent interference in my affairs. Why had he been putting into the Little Mother’s head troublous thoughts which, what with her husband, and her house, and her children, and the schools and old women to look after a little between whiles, might never have obtained a footing in that guileless hold?

Presently, by way of *amende*, I remark that she and her

husband are a couple of noodles—which only half soothes my lady, as it trends on the dignity of the Rev. Langmore Dickens. But the shade soon passes, and Agatha asks me if I don't think it odd that we have never heard of James? We so very seldom speak of him now, that the name comes after a little pause, and with a sort of hush. She is a good deal surprised by the news of my visit to the office, and of the information I obtained and have never communicated; but she only looks at me, and, with the appearance of Langmore, who desires the lamp, our conversation ends.

Early on the following morning Agatha, Langmore, Robert and Johnny, and Hodge (as we nicknamed our baby), set out for Paris. Mr. Richards had exchanged the vicarage for two or three months with a friend whose cure was in London, and had left the village a week or two ago. Miss Hervey was on the Rhine. She had wished me to be the companion of her tour; but I had been looking forward to this season of rest from the painful effort of continual self-restraint, and resisted her invitation. She would care for no other companion, she assured me. We had long been on terms of an equal friendship, in which the disparity of ages did not count. "Not this year, Elizabeth. Let me be still, at home." And she had kissed me with a heavenly silence, and gone upon her way. No confidence had passed between us as to that life-burden which was causing me to long for peace. It was better so. The reserve in our friendship, which has never been broken into, lent a delightful sense of something more (which might, but need not be) to our trustful and mutually cheering companionship.

I had, then, the promise of a lonely month before me:

only Douglas and Ethel to share my solitude ; only the few things I could do to please my ever-kind, considerate vicar in his absence to occupy my time and attention. All the glorious summer mornings—all the long drawn-out sweetness of the twilight hours, to wander on the shore and think—of James. I am ready to admit that such mental employment would seem to have been doubtfully healthful, and somewhat morbid in character. But I think, for this once, it might have had a beneficial effect on me, tired as I was, and in dire need of relaxation. To feel that I might sit and think, and be sorry, and listen to what the sea would say, without fear of having to compose my features and occupy my listless hands suddenly, from time to time, at the approach of dear ones who must not see my abstraction or be suffered to guess at my folly, would have been a real relief to my burdened heart and brain. Not to have Langmore searching me out, and finding me unprepared for his coming, and saying, as sometimes he had occasion, "Now, Glad, pull yourself together ! Agatha wants you ;" or, "Mrs. Borrit would like you to go and see her baby;" or, "I wish you would just go round to the school and have a look at the work-class, as the Little Mother is busy," &c., &c.—this, for a continuance, would have been the worst thing that could have befallen me ; but, for a season, it might—I am still disposed to believe it—have stilled my aching nerve, and given me time to compose my mind and renew my strength for the battle.

Battle that was never to be fought again. Whether I was left the vanquisher or vanquished on the field is not for me to say. But the fight between my frail heart's selfish

sorrow and my sense of patience owed to God and of duty to my kind was at an end.

It was August, a month later in the year than the time at which James Evered had returned from China, eight years ago. But the season was the same—full, bright, glorious summertide. And the scene was not greatly changed. I had always been averse to alterations in that wherewith I was so well content.

Our life was different now. My child-sister was a woman, with sweet young lives around her that had learned to call her *mother*, and to regard her as a personage of some distinction and consequence—changes which had come to pass most naturally in their course, and only seemed strange to me now when I looked back to the time of her early girlhood and the return of my promised husband to claim his fickle bride :—"Oh, James! James! James! I have atoned—I have atoned!" And the sea said, "Never more!" But, then, I might mistake the intention of the Voice. It was true that I could not atone. The waves might thus answer in the name of truth—and not for James Martyn.

I often wonder if I really was surprised—if any power were left in me of experiencing one clearly-defined emotion of any kind—when, from my seat in the sunshine among the long, brown blades of grass, I looked toward the little wicket-gate, and saw my dear come in?

No fear that I should not know him now! Time loses half its power to change when once maturity sets in. He took off his hat. I rose, and advanced to meet him. We shook hands, and I dare say we said, "How d'you do?" In the first glad, tumultuous moment I had held out both my

hands ; but his left hand was engaged, and I had dropped mine instantly. James now lifted it from my side, looked at it, and quietly let it go.

"Gladys *Horne*," he said with emphasis, "I scarcely thought to have found you thus—unchanged."

"Unchanged!" I said with a laugh. A shyness had fallen upon me. I could not say *Mr. Martyn*, yet I feared to call him James. "I am surely not unchanged?"

"No," says he, very serenely ; "you are nearly eight years older than when I went away."

We were silent. There had come to be a little space between us. It was *he* who had been so moved the *first* time he came home! But what could I now expect? What had I been idiot enough to look and hope for in the first bewildering joy of his approach? If I had spoken now, or moved, I must have utterly betrayed myself. I waited, my heart beating like a hammer against my breast. The thought occurred to me—as strange thoughts will at such moments—that it was trying to beat out a way of escape, and in another instant would be free.

"Gladys," says James, after a tedious interval—perhaps about forty seconds—"are you lonely here?"

With what appears to me a superhuman effort, I recovered myself sufficiently to reply : "Yes. No. You knew, then, that Agatha was married?"

"I knew it for the first time a few months ago. I missed the notice—I suppose there was one—in the English papers ; but I heard, six years ago, from a friend who had just arrived in China, that a cousin of his was lately married to Miss Horne, of Durling. My friend supposed the lady was

connected with our firm. I was foolish enough to conclude that it was you. I never thought of the child, at first. Afterwards, when I reflected that it might be Miss Agatha Horne, I asked Franks what was the Christian name of the lady who had married his cousin. He did not recollect. I pressed him. He promised to write to his sister and inquire. He never did so. I asked him about it every mail until he left Tchoo-loo. He always laughed (not understanding about our old—friendship), and said he had not yet received the news; promising not to forget to inquire next time he was writing home. He always did forget : it was nothing to him."

James paused a moment; but it was such a relief to me that he should go on talking, that I only nodded my head in silence, and he continued :

"Curd never writes to me except on business. I did not choose to inquire of him. I had but little"—I thought he was going to say *hope*; but after an instant's pause he added, "doubt on the matter of its being you. Early this year I came across Franks again. He had been to England, since I had seen him, for his health. He had not forgotten my old interest in the name of his cousin's wife. He said he supposed I had found out by that time that Mrs. Langmore Dickens had been a Miss Agatha Horne. I thanked him for the information; it was news to me. I asked him if Mrs. Dickens' sister were also married. He did not know; he believed his sister had mentioned a Miss Horne. He had not himself visited his cousin." (Ah, if he had, I should have had news of James.) "On hearing this, I determined to come home. It was some months before I could arrange to leave Tchoo-loo. And now," says he gloomily—"now

that I re-consider why I have come back—for what reason I have put over two thousand leagues between me and what—such as it was, had long become my home—I *wonder*, Gladys Horne."

Was it the sight of me that made him wonder ?

"Then, James, why *did* you come ?"

"I will tell you, Gladys," says he, resuming his quietude. "I thought of you—unmarried, perhaps, and lonely—of the woman who had once, with her hand in mine, repeated clearly after me the words I made her speak : 'James Evered Martyn, I will be your wife ;' I thought, in my folly, that such a vow might even yet be sacred in the sight of God. It was for this I came. Was it not worse than folly to come for such a thought ? Have I been less than a madman to think thus of a woman who does not want, who never wanted, me—whose life is complete, though lonely—to whom I am less than nothing ?"

He paused ; yet I answered not. I had no doubt of his enduring love. I did not, and do not, think it was open to me to doubt it now. He had spoken as if it were for my sake only that he came. That hurt me not. What I doubted—what I would have freely given existence not to doubt—was that I had his pardon, fair and free. While he stood there, cool and self-possessed, to tell me he had thought—in his folly, as he chose to call it—that the woman he had once promised to cherish might now be lonely, and would, perhaps, be willing in her hour of need to accept as a refuge from herself the heart she had rejected in the day of her strength, I could not feel forgiven with a full forgiveness—such as would make his love, not a refuge, but a glory.

Yet, however it might be, I did not want to let him go; only I knew not how to speak. Sure I was that never again would he stoop to sue to me.

"Was it not abject folly?" he repeated, and half turned away.

I felt that I should lose him. I must speak. "Yes, James," I said—for I wist not what to say—"folly enough, God bless you!"

I moved closer to where he stood, that he might take me in his arms, I think, if he were so minded; which he gently did. "Am I to stop?" he said. And I said, "Yes."

A light of serene contentment broke over his beautiful brown face. Yes, he should stay, if I might decide it; but now, if I were really forgiven (and there was hope in his touch), I did not mean that he should stay like this—calmly content to be of use to me, in giving all. It may be that I, too, was proud. I know that my loving, grateful, joy-awakened heart cried out that he, also, should rejoice.

"But not so," I whispered. "Not because I am lonely, sir!"

"Why, then?" he said more eagerly, and tightening a little the arm that was holding me.

"Because I worship you."

Oh, but he stayed rejoicing!

That was two years ago; and my beloved husband says that he is blest. But I say to the sea, "I shall never atone! I shall never atone!" And the sea saith, "Never more." Amen.

St. Mary Magdalene.

Words by BARBARA WORDSWORTH.

Music by ARTHUR H. BROWN.

$\text{♩} = 92.$

pp Andante religioso.

cres.

1. Beauti-ful, blest, and ho-ly! White, yea, whi-ter than snow! The souls of the earth-born
 2. Cometh a vi-sion of Ma-ry, The tear-washed Magda-lene, Her garments are floating

p *cres.*

know thee That tar-ry and toil be-low. Qui-et-ly breaks the o-cean,
 near me, Dainty, and spiced, and clean. Me seemeth the love with-in her Might

dim. *mp*

Plash-ing the pebbly shore In a rest-ful mu-si-cal mo-tion, Singa,
 pray for strength for the faint; For she, too, hath been a sin-ner, I

mf

ST. MARY MAGDALENE.

Glo-ri-a e-ver-more! In a rest-ful mu-si-cal mo-tion Sings,
al-so would be a saint, Qui-et-ly breaks the o-cean,

The first system of the musical score. The vocal line (treble clef) begins with a forte (*f*) dynamic, singing 'Glo-ri-a e-ver-more!'. The piano accompaniment (grand staff) starts with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The key signature has two flats (B-flat and E-flat), and the time signature is common time (C). The piano part features a flowing, arpeggiated accompaniment.

Glo-ri-a, e-ver-more. Plashing the peb-bly shore. Glo-ri-a! Glo-ri-a! Glo-ri-a e-ver-

The second system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with 'Glo-ri-a, e-ver-more. Plashing the peb-bly shore.' and then 'Glo-ri-a! Glo-ri-a! Glo-ri-a e-ver-'. The piano accompaniment features a 'ten.' (tenth) marking and a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic. The piano part continues with the arpeggiated accompaniment.

- more! In a rest-ful mu-si-cal mo-tion, Sings Glo-ri-a e-ver-

The third system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with '- more! In a rest-ful mu-si-cal mo-tion, Sings Glo-ri-a e-ver-'. The piano accompaniment features a mezzo-piano (*mp*) dynamic and a 'dim.' (diminuendo) marking. The piano part continues with the arpeggiated accompaniment.

- - more!

The fourth system of the musical score. The vocal line continues with '- - more!'. The piano accompaniment features a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic, a piano (*p*) dynamic, a 'rall.' (rallentando) marking, and a pianissimo (*pp*) dynamic. The piano part continues with the arpeggiated accompaniment.

SAINT MARY MAGDALENE.

BEAUTIFUL, blest, and holy,
White, yea, whiter than snow !
The souls of the earth-born know thee,
That tarry and toil below.

Quietly breaks the ocean,
Plashing the pebbly shore ;
In a restful, musical motion
Sings Gloria evermore !

Cometh a vision of Mary,
The tear-washed Magdalene ;
Her garments are floating near me,
Dainty, and spiced, and clean.

Meseemeth the love within her
Might pray for strength for the faint ;
For she, too, hath been a sinner :
I also would be a saint.



C O M I N G .

I have had dreams.



T was Christmas morning—the first for some years that I had spent in the old home. My father had owned the White House, and had farmed the land thereunto belonging. So had his father, and his father's father, and one generation further back. It was not unnatural, therefore, that when I, being an only son, began to grow up to man's estate, my father should expect me to take an hereditary interest in the ways and means of farming, and to confirm his resolution that I also should live (he called it *settle*), and die on the paternal acres. In this expectation he was disappointed—cruelly so, he said; and Heaven knows how bitterly the word has come home to his son's heart, in many a lonely hour, in many a far-off land.

It was natural also, that since my father had shown some

signs of a roving disposition in his own youth, and had given up his heart's desire to fulfil my grandfather's wishes, he should see in my unfortunate self-will an impropriety more than usually glaring. As he had yielded in early life, however, so now, in maturer years, he was once more brought to give way; and I obtained his reluctant consent to travel for two years before taking any decided step towards an establishment in life.

This was just what I most desired. I had no very definite views of what I would "be" or do. I did not long for the army; I never had sighed for the sea. "We have plenty of money," I told my father. "And you require to spend it," he dryly answered, having furnished me handsomely with the means of doing so.

In the second year of my travels, at Jerusalem, I received the news of my father's sudden death. I believe in that moment I began to feel remorse. I did not immediately retrace my steps. Our affairs were very simple. All was arranged for me by my father's solicitor—or in process to become so—and my father's head man, an able and trustworthy farmer, appointed to the management of the White House Farm, before many weeks were over. For three years I continued to live abroad, slowly bringing my mind to accomplish the expiation which I concluded was due to the memory of my kind, ill-requited father—though, alas! obedience could pleasure him no more.

On one cold day in December, 1873, I arrived at the White House, determined to "settle" and to farm the land, for a while under the necessary guidance of our good McClintock. I am bound to say that I take an interest in the work, as time goes on, and that the White House lands are not the worst farmed in the county, although the bailiff's

services, in the way of direction, have been gradually fined to a point.

On Christmas morning, then, of the year I have mentioned, I awoke in the White House—and indeed I “awoke in a fright.” Not that I had dreamed of that sombre person the vision of whose presence was, according to my lord cardinal’s curse, to produce the same effect on the nerves of the little jackdaw. Yet it was a dream from which I awoke, cold and trembling—yes, actually *trembling*—on that Christmas morning. Thank Heaven, only a dream! I arose quickly, and looked out upon the wide white fields of snow. *They* were real. The dream was hideous unreality. It was hardly daylight; but the dawn shed a pale and lovely lustre on the stretch of meadow and woodland (shut in by noble hills) that was clad in one unvarying robe of tintless snow. The bells in the old church-steeple were playing the “*Venite Adoramus*,” and the sound came faint and sweet from the village across the valley in the clear morning air.

A cold plunge soon did something to remove the horror of my dream, caused, as it seemed to me, less by the vision itself than by a certain weight of consciousness under which I awoke, that what I had seen and felt had a real existence—somewhere—at some time. Perhaps it had been—perhaps it would be; at any rate, it was. After a good walk and a comfortable breakfast, the sentiment was well-nigh dispersed. The impression of it remained.

After so long an absence I had many acquaintances to make, some few to renew. I had not yet seen any of my neighbours. Cards had been left at the White House, and one which particularly interested me; it bore these words only: “Mr. Evelyn Heathcote, Quarry Lodge.” My interest was awakened on account of the next proximity of Quarry

Lodge to the farm. Between ourselves and the late tenants of the Lodge close intimacy had existed of old. I could not but feel some anxiety as to my new neighbours. Who was Mr. Evlyn Heathcote? Had he a wife? Was he a widower? What was his family? Or, perhaps, he was alone, like me.

About noon I was strolling (led, I have since declared, by "a spirit in my feet") near the lodge-gates of Quarry Lodge. Why not immediately resolve my doubts? I hesitated—yet I was not lost. Perhaps I ought not to call so early in the day? Perhaps I ought only to leave my card? Certainly I was almost a stranger to English *etiquette*, and knew not what solecism I might be guilty of in thus indulging curiosity by a simply neighbourly act. But, as I did not greatly care, I was by this time halfway up the drive.

The servant, who must have mistaken my query when I asked if Mr. Heathcote were at home, said yes, and led me into the house. The old familiar room, that used to be the library, with French windows opening on to the lawn—strange, yet familiar. It was not a library now, though there were books in it—a goodly number. There were some Christmas roses in a vase on the mantelpiece; there was a fern-case on a table in the south window; there was an easel, placed sideways to the light, as if for recent service; there was a grand-piano, open; there was a nameless air of occupation that I thought was not that of Mr. Evlyn Heathcote. Yet, why not? I was just beginning to ponder this occult question, when the door opened, and Nelly herself came in.

I did not know she was Nelly then. I knew that she was young, and fresh, and fair of skin, with dark brown glossy hair, and that she was rather tall and of a very graceful carriage, as she advanced into the room and frankly held

out her hand : "How do you do, Mr. Campbell? It is very kind of you to call——" I think she was about to say "so soon," or "so early," but stopped, lest the words should convey the unintended hint of a reproach.

"Thank you," I said, wondering if this could be Mrs. Evelyn Heathcote, or whether there might have been any mistake.

"Papa will be in soon," she remarked, as I took the chair she had indicated, opposite her own. I was in a manner relieved.

"I should not have intruded at so early an hour," I told her, "but I understood your servant to say Mr. Heathcote was in."

"Oh, no! Papa has gone to church with the boys."

There was something in this young lady that made me feel at home with her the moment she entered the room. In that moment I had experienced a feeling—not like the rather common one of having somewhere seen her face before, but of assurance that, when I heard the voice to which the face belonged, I should find its tones familiar. This I did; but without further *experience* in the matter. It was, or it seemed, simply natural. With all this, I could hardly say to Miss Heathcote, "Why are you not at church, also?" but the thought occurred to me, and I suppose I looked it. For the first time she appeared slightly self-conscious, and, with a trifling blush, told me she had not felt equal to going out that morning. She had been upset, she said, terribly so—by a dream.

"Indeed! It must have been a very bad one—or very startling," I amended, not being able to connect the idea of anything evil with Miss Heathcote.

"It was awful," said she, solemnly. "I think I should

have felt better afterwards if I might have told my father. But papa objects to the telling of any dreams; they are, as he says, such twaddle. The boys, of course, would have laughed." Here she paused, but looked at me straightly with a pair of harebell eyes. Straightly I answered them :

"Tell *me*."

"I dreamed I was out at sea, far away from sight of land. There was a fearful storm. My father was not in the ship. I was on deck, by myself, apart. Then some one stood beside me. It was a man, and he brought a sense of comfort; and then, suddenly, there came a lurid glare. The vessel was in flames. Though there was thunder all the while and the waves were furious, we could hardly hear them now for the roaring of the fire and the wind. I shall *never* forget the look of that last awful wave; it seemed on fire, and it swallowed us up. I know it swallowed us up. But while it was coming the terror—no, not the terror—that had left me, somehow—but the *waiting* woke me. What is the matter?"

"Nothing," I answered, hastily; "but you told your dream so vividly that I seemed to *see* it, and to feel the awe that was possessing you." Which, indeed, was true.

A gentle look thanked me for my evident sympathy. Then her eyes met mine once again, and she said, in a very low voice :

"Are you John?"

"Yes," I answered, stupidly; "but you called me Alfred."

"I, Mr. Campbell!"

I was in for it. I had not intended to tell her of my dream. Seeing that her nerves had been sorely tried, I thought that to reveal to her the coincidence of our visions might prove a further shock; *for her dream was the same as*

mine. I confessed it now, adding that, as I stood beside her on the burning deck—my arm around her, though I could not see her face—and as we watched together that terrible last wave, gigantic, reflecting in a dim and “awful red” the horrid glare around, she had said, “It is coming, Alfred!” And, after a momentary experience of exalted self-surrender, my dream had flown. In that moment our souls had been lifted high above the smoke and fury of the flames; with the confidence of a full-grown reason I had uttered one prayer to the Most High—wordless to my remembrance; she had echoed it, and I awoke—to the full trouble of conscious recollection of the gloom and smothered anguish of my dream, and the partial loss of a vision of high faith and solemn resolution, which has never wholly faded from my inner sense. Something of this I told her, and for a few moments bitterly regretted not having framed some excuse to explain away the foolish exclamation I had made when she said, “Are you John?” But very soon she was composed, and listening to the few reassuring words I was able to speak to her, while very far from feeling calm at heart. When I afterwards asked her if she had seen my face or heard my voice in the dream, she told me, no; but when she looked at me after the recital of the dream-story she felt, hardly believing it possible, that she saw the face of the man who had supported her on the vessel’s deck. In her dream she had known that her companion’s name was John. She expressed some surprise that, in *my* dream, she had called me *Alfred*. I said nothing further at the time.

We had not been more than five-and-twenty minutes together when Mr. Heathcote and his two young sons came in from church. Miss Heathcote’s father, a widower, was a fine, cheerful-looking man of middle age. He kindly

expressed pleasure in seeing me, and made me welcome after so neighbourly a fashion that, in the end, I stayed to eat my Christmas dinner with him and his family. He would not hear of my going back to an empty house on such a day.

Mr. Heathcote pinched his daughter's cheek, and inquired: "What *fad* kept you away from service this morning, Nelly? Glorious anthem! Fine old church, Mr. Campbell—don't you think so? About the time of the Conquest, I believe. But you are at home in these parts. Boys, show Mr. Campbell the garden." Which the boys did; and, when luncheon was over, the afternoon was pleasantly spent, partly in helping the young fellows to make a fine snow-man at a sheltered corner of the lawn. Then, at my suggestion, we busied ourselves in sweeping a path for Miss Nelly, so that she might come and look at our handiwork. She came, and had quite recovered her spirits. But the short winter day was nearly done. Except for the exceeding whiteness of all around it would have been already dark, and we had soon to abandon outdoor exercise, to seek artificial warmth and less active enjoyment within.

After that we had a pleasant firelight hour; then a cheerful dinner; followed by a happy evening, during which Nelly sang for us, and the elder boy now and then played the airs with her as she sang, on that "sweetest and most expressionless of instruments," the flute.

It was impossible that Nelly Heathcote and I should be henceforth as strangers, or even as the acquaintances of a day. From the time when she had found in my face, having known me about five minutes, sufficient encouragement to give me her confidence on a matter which greatly troubled her mind—from the time when we both had learned of the strange sympathy by which our spirits had been drawn

together in sleep—from the time that she had suffered the perturbation into which she had been thrown by the discovery to be soothed by the few calm, perhaps almost tender, words that I felt myself emboldened to address to her—from that little span of time, hardly half-an-hour in length, we met as friends. After that Christmas Day we met something in the manner of old friends—till a sudden shyness grew up between us; to be followed by a feeling deeper and sweeter than the friendship of the first days. There followed, at least, the confession of it. I believe there had been in both our hearts from the beginning an unacknowledged sense of our nearness to, if not of our oneness with, each other.

At first I feared to disturb her by any allusion to the dream; but when I found that she recurred more than once to the subject, that it seemed a relief to her to speak aloud of what neither she nor I could forget, I entered freely into its discussion. For us both the strange occurrence had a sort of awful fascination, the solemnity of which was lightened as time went on. We never spoke of the dream as twofold, but always as “The Dream.” We could not separate in our minds the phantasm which had been presented to my brain from that which had enacted itself in hers. We never for an instant doubted the identity of the figures we had seen, and not seen, in the dream. Impossible to doubt the something indefinable, yet real, by which we had been attracted to each other in the dream. We felt a certain shrinking for a time from the thought of the dream being fulfilled. It never, I think, amounted to a fear. With the thought came—at least, in my heart it was so—a realization of the sacredness of our inwoven lives, and of the sweet trust, which I delighted to believe imposed upon me, of sheltering her whom I had seemed to cherish and to strengthen in the dream. These

thoughts took more than half its horror from the mind's-eye picture of that fatal hour of trial—which, indeed, in its first presentment had not lacked an element of grandeur at its close.

After a while we talked less of the matter, and by degrees the sharp edges of the impression made on us by the dream were softened off into a more misty outline. The effect of it on our minds can hardly be said to have faded, only it did not make itself felt so persistently, or with such an absorbing interest as at first.

The White House fields joined closely the grounds of Quarry Lodge. Besides those afforded by the frequent interchange of civilities between the household at the Lodge and the lonely owner of the Farm, Nelly and I enjoyed constant opportunities of intercourse, with all the advantages of unpremeditated meetings. Mr. Heathcote was observant from the first, but hindered us not.

A motherless maiden, who rules her father's house, has many facilities for the cultivation of friendships, not paternally discouraged, which would not be hers as one of the subordinate members of a family. When the holidays were over, and the boys gone back to school, the facilities in Nelly's case increased. Until then it had seemed to me that the lads (whose rough and ready devotion to their sister was only equalled by the gentler ardour with which it was returned) were never out of the way. After that things progressed rapidly, and very joyfully for me.

Things were going well with the Farm also. Euan McClintock's zeal saved me from an over-pressure of business, but I was not idle. Being, like the son in the parable, who afterwards repented, and went (alas! in my case, too late), I resolved to accept the duties of my position in the spirit in which my father had recommended them to me, and

thus to fulfil the utmost of his desires. There had never been a bailiff at White House Farm in his day or in his father's; and I determined to undertake the personal superintendence of all the work as soon as I should be qualified for the task.

Meantime there was many a happy hour of leisure between sunrise and sundown; and many a pleasant walk over the hills and through the woods we went—Miss Nelly doubly protected by Jan, Mr. Heathcote's Scandinavian retriever (I am not acquainted with the breed, but that is the species to which my father-in-law always assures me his big, brown, gentle, rough-coated friend belongs), who, with my black-and-white terrier, Tip, made up an excellent *parti carré*.

On one occasion we had wandered farther than was our wont. I had met Miss Heathcote and Jan in the lane—as usual. We had followed the windings of the beech, and afterwards of the hazel, and finally of the alder-copse, to their utmost limit. The spirit of life was awake in the woods, and the green things budded at the touch of spring. All kindly influences of time and place lent themselves to the accomplishment of our fateful dream—which came about on this wise :—

We had reached the gate leading from the last of the White House fields into the paddock belonging to Quarry Lodge. We had wandered late in the woods; we had filled Nelly's basket with wild-flowers, and Jan tenderly carried it home in his mouth; we had lingered, enjoying to the uttermost the numberless sweet scents, and sights, and sounds of the springtime, and yet not a word was uttered of that which was nearest my heart. A certain reserve had hung over us all the day. At the gate we often parted, especially

if I had been longer away than usual from the men. On this occasion, however, I stayed Nelly from passing through it, held the gate, closed before her, in my hand, and asked her to be my wife. The answer was so long in coming, that I was fain to press my suit. "Oh, Mr. Campbell," she began.

"Please, Nelly, call me John!"

"J. A. E. C.," remarked Nelly, with seeming irrelevance.

"Well, 'Jack,' if you like," said I.

This obliged Miss Heathcote to laugh. "Of course, that is not what I mean," said she, and looked over the hedge into the field, where some sheep and lambs were feeding, lazily indifferent to the sweet eyes that seemed to regard them so earnestly. Standing thus, she made clear to me what was in her mind: "I should like, if I call you by your Christian name, to use one that other people do not generally call you by. I know your initials—what names do they stand for besides John?"

I was conscious of a throb, resembling pain, at her question, but would not stop to analyze its cause. "John Alfred Edgar Campbell," I replied.

"And what did your mother call you?"

"'Jack.' That is so long ago."

"And what did——"

I saw I must expound the whole matter. "My father called me 'John,'" I explained, hastily. "My aunt Dale calls me 'Edgar,' because I was christened after her husband, who was my godfather."

"And did no one ever call you 'Alfred?'"

"No one," I answered, promptly; but a voice within me added, *except yourself*.

"Then I think I should like—if I called you by your Christian name—to call you 'Alfred.'"

"Dear Nelly, call me what you like! Only say 'yes,' dear Nelly!—Nelly, is it coming?"

"It is coming, Alfred."

Even as I held her to my heart, even as I pressed my first kiss on those dear lips, all through my being I felt the unutterable shock of hearing those four words from the same voice that spoke them in the dream! When I looked at Nelly I saw in her face the reflection of the feeling which must have shown itself in mine. She, too, had remembered the words. When I had told her of them, at the first, she had wondered to hear that she had called me "Alfred" in the dream, in which she had herself been conscious that my name was John. I had not thought well at the moment to deepen the excited feeling from which she already suffered, by telling her that the name used was but another of those I actually bore. Nor had we discussed it since. I believe Nelly may have forgotten the words (which she had only heard through me), until the repetition of them, and the consciousness of it which my face unavoidably betrayed, recalled them with a shock.

But since then it has seemed to us not to deepen the wonder, but to make all clear. The dream was fulfilled. Under its shadow we had once been beside the still waters. To this supreme moment all the experiences of the past few months had led. But, just as some events are represented to us in dreams, after their occurrence, under grotesque figures by which, on consideration, we can hardly recognise their true forms—so had this foreshadowing of things to be been presented to us in a shape of terror, under an aspect so appalling, that in the lovely form of its accomplishment we could not at first perceive a likeness to its image in the past. The consummation could not be immediately revealed to us as such,

but shocked our sense by seeming a fresh link in a chain of terrible appearances.

Blest dream, which first drew us closely together! Blest accomplishment, making of us twain one, for evermore! Amen. Thus may my darling ever rest undoubting faith in me! Thus may be ever verified my premonition of a sweet and holy guardianship of her!

May we but go through the fire of life together, hand-in-hand, so that in its latest hour she may cling to me as on the burning vessel's deck, and, whispering of the King of Terrors, "It is coming, Alfred," find strength from Heaven in me—then might our hearts be lifted, with some realization of the sublime abandonment of my vision, to that region high, and pure, and clear, which we have so surely proved to be, but which the dust, and noise, and tumult of the earth, to me it seems, are mighty in their weakness to obscure.

It is nearly five years since the above slight sketch was penned. When I found it, two years ago, in Edgar's old desk, I conceived the idea of giving it and its conclusion to the world; but I have never had the heart to bring it to the light again until to-day.

I am the widow of Edgar Dale, young Edgar's godfather, and the sister of Alan Campbell, once of White House Farm. Our boy was always very dear to me. I knew the generous spirit of the lad when it was still untried—that brave spirit of which, perhaps, he gives no glimpse in the short recital of those singular circumstances which led, as he supposed, to his life's bliss. I remember saying to my husband once, "Edgar, that boy would make a noble man, if he had but religion added to his gifts." And Mr. Dale replied, "Religion, Sarah, is a word not to be lightly handled." When my

husband was oracular I seldom questioned. And many a speech that when uttered seemed obscure has cleared itself like crystal in the light of experience and after-thought.

It is time to begin my strange conclusion to a most strange tale.

Edgar and Nelly had been married about two years, when Mr. Evelyn Heathcote was ruined. Through some unfortunate investments (some people said speculations), he not only lost all he had, but became so deeply involved, that to clear his good name, and restore to him peace of mind, cost his son-in-law no inconsiderable sum. Edgar could do no less than pay his wife's father's debts. But he was not very rich (though his income was ample for his needs), and when it came to Mr. Heathcote taking up his residence at the Farm, and the having to pay for the schooling of the boys—with the prospect of being called upon to start them presently in some career of life—it did not appear to any of us that my poor boy's resources could hold out, without a very serious charge on his own actual and possible responsibilities.

Just about this time my poor husband died. He died in May. In June Edgar came to me, and asked if I would go and live at the White House, and make a home for Mr. Heathcote and the boys?

I said, "My boy, my boy! what are you going to do?"

Edgar told me cheerfully that he had lately received a letter from an old friend, who had gone out to Australia some years before. It appeared that Mr. Jackson was a wholesale trader, and was engaged in a large and profitable business. He told Edgar that a partnership in his house was open to any young man of promise, who would go out and join him—"yourself, for instance, if it were not for your

own inge-neuk. You did not greatly appreciate England once, as I remember; but have doubtless settled down there by this time, with all the adhesiveness of a model family man." It further appeared that a large capital would not be required for the enterprise.

I read the letter, and handed it back in silence. Edgar said, "Well, Aunt Sarah?" and looked at me. I set my face.

"I think I shall go," he said.

"It is trade, Edgar."

"It is honest, aunt."

And he did go. I vainly urged that there was no necessity for so extreme a course. So, afterwards, did Heathcote. But, then, he was moping and wretched, and Edgar and Nelly saw it. He could not bear to be a burden on them, and it was too late in life for him to repair the ill that had fallen on him and his family by entering into any active employment on his own account. He had his boys to think of also: I believe he thought of them, fruitlessly, without ceasing. He was, it seemed to me, secretly pleased at the young man's decision—against which in the first instance he had not even lifted his voice.

We soon found that Edgar had offered himself for the vacant post, with his wife's entire approval—though she was sad at times at the thought of leaving England and those she loved at home. Edgar, I believe, felt nothing but a sense of strong relief from the pressing weight of care he had laboured under for the last few weeks. It took some time to arrange the matter, and it was late in the autumn before all was settled and the time of departure fixed.

Meanwhile it had been decided that Heathcote's elder boy should accompany the emigrants, and that Edgar should

provide him with employment in Sydney—probably in the business he was about to join.

I parted from our dear ones with a heavy heart. I had once known something such a parting from my eldest-born ; and now almost a second, and scarcely less dear, son was torn from me in my loneliness. Although I knew not all, I greeted sair ; and was a cold comforter, I fear, to poor Heathcote, whom I ought to have regarded in that time of trial.

My children had all left the nest, and I had gone, as Edgar desired, to preside at the White House. Evlyn Heathcote already fancied himself a farmer, and soon began to amuse himself by giving orders to McClintock and the men, and winking at the omission when they were, not unfrequently, disobeyed.

The rest is hard to tell, but needs not many words.

In a short space of time Leonard Heathcote returned home from sea ; but Edgar and Nelly Campbell have not come home. They never will. Leonard was saved from a fireship, on Christmas morning, with a small part of the passengers and crew. *We did not know him.* He had come through a mortal agony ; and he brought home a tale which might have killed his stupefied hearers if human hearts were not so hard to break.

How the *Alcestis* had taken fire no one of the survivors knew. But the cruel fate of a burning death, in the middle of “a wide, wide sea,” had overtaken most of those on board. Two boats were lowered, and had been picked up by a vessel homeward-bound, but only a few could be saved. Leonard had shouted uselessly his sister’s name in the roaring of the flames and the din of the crackling timber, and was being carried in the press towards a possible deliverance,

when he suddenly fronted those two well-known forms. They stood pale and dauntless in the lurid light, clinging together with the clasp of coming death. Leonard would have striven to snatch his sister from her husband, and carry her to the boat. He could not reach her, but came very close; and then Edgar's strong arm flung him onward, and his voice sternly urged the boy to save himself without delay.

For yet a few moments Leonard could behold them where they stood. Husband or wife stirred not. Edgar turned a look of unutterable tenderness on his dear companion's face. She lifted her hand, and her lips moved. Leonard heard nothing. But, when she had spoken, Edgar raised his eyes to Heaven, and on both their faces shone a solemn, awful light (not born of the outward fire), such as the boy had never seen till then. It made a man of him. In that moment he knew there was no rescue for those two.

The eager young life escaped: but how might they avert their burning doom? Had she not, doubtless, said the "It is coming, Alfred"? Had not that supreme consummation now arrived, which he had looked for, in the days of his first hope, as coming in the shape of a peaceful end to a long and happy life of love and union? Now I know the beginning of the end; and see how those two pure souls must have felt, in an awful ecstasy, that the hour was come, indeed—and given themselves to God.

So my brave boy and his darling wife went down together in the burning ship.

Dreams.

Words by BARBARA WORDSWORTH.

Music by ARTHUR H. BROWN.

$\text{♩} = 80$. *Andante moderato*.



mf

1. Dreams are the wings of An - - gels, Bear - ing to lands un -
 2. Show - ing us things that may..... be, Scat - ter - ing things that
 3. But by a sleep di - vi - - ded, Lives are not rent in

mp

- - known..... Hearts of the hea - vy la - - - den,
 are..... In - to a thou - sand frag - - ments,
 twain, - Whom I have met in dream - - land,

Spi - rits of them that moan ; Lift - ing us light - ly
 Sha - dow - y, faint, and far ; And, of our - selves, the
 Shall I not meet a - - gain, E - ven as I be -

fp

DREAMS.

o . . . ver Time's e - ver toss - ing tide,
 sha . . . dows, O - ver the worlds we go,
 held them Erst on the far - ther side—

cres.

Lead-ing us where his bil - lows Break on the far - ther
 Touching the souls we knew not, Miss-ing the paths we
 Borne by the dear dream - an - gels O - ver the toss - ing

p

side, Leading us where his bil - lows
 know, Touching the souls we knew not,
 tide, Borne by the dear dream - an - gels

cres. *p*

rall.
 Break on the far - ther side.
 Miss-ing the paths we know.
 O - ver the toss - ing tide. *a tempo.*

col canto. *p* *pp*

D R E A M S .

DREAMS are the wings of Angels,
Bearing to lands unknown
Hearts of the heavy-laden,
Spirits of them that moan,
Lifting us lightly over
Time's ever tossing tide,
Leading us where his billows
Break on the farther side ;

Showing us things that may be,
Scattering things that are
Into a thousand fragments,
Shadowy, faint, and far,
And, of ourselves the shadows,
Over the worlds we go—
Touching the souls we knew not,
Missing the paths we know.

But by a sleep divided,
Lives are not rent in twain—
Whom I have met in dreamland,
Shall I not meet again ?
Even as I beheld them
Erst on the farther side,
Borne by the dear dream Angels
Over the tossing tide.



R U.

CHAPTER I.

It is the little rift within the lute.



AT the time when Leslie Dering was left motherless she felt more than the usual forlornness of her orphaned state. An only child, whose father died while she was yet so young that no effort of memory could now recall him to her mental view, she was, on her mother's death, without a near relation in the world. All her life had been lived in the house of her distant cousin, Harry Dynecourt. Hugh Dering, Leslie's father, had been appointed Harry's guardian when the heir, then a young boy, succeeded to the Dynecourt estate. At that time he was lately married, and he and Mrs. Dering went by family arrangement to live at Dynecourt House, in the county of Salop, during Harry's

minority. About five years afterwards Hugh Dering died. The young heir, on leaving college, where his course was brief, went out to India on a visit to his mother's uncle, who held a Government appointment there. Being pleased with his relations, and with their Indian life, and having no ties in England, Harry had remained over thirteen years in the East, and had never cared to visit his home in Shropshire till the death of his great-uncle, which occurred only a month or two before Leslie's mother died.

Thus it had happened that Mrs. Dering had never been disturbed in her residence at Dynecourt House, but had lived there during her widowhood with the "one fair daughter," who had grown from almost babyhood to girlhood, and from girlhood into womanhood, while Harry Dynecourt was abroad. Suddenly came the intelligence—long looked-for, yet long unexpected—that the owner was coming home. Nearly all the interest on Mrs. Dering's little capital had been accumulating in his absence. She would now be fairly well off; and she and Leslie were cheerfully making preparations for removal to a modest house not far from the great one which had been their home so long, when, quite suddenly, she died, and Leslie was left alone.

It was with a dreadful sinking of the heart that the poor girl accepted the invitation of "Aunt Farr," her mother's cousin, to take up her abode with her and her children. Aunt Farr had lately left her home in the far north, and settled in Shropshire. Until then the occasions on which Leslie had held any intercourse with her cousins were very rare. Ever shrinking from contact with the unfamiliar, the prospect acquired an added bitterness from the present desolation of her home. Not that it would cost her a pang, she thought, to leave the old place from which had vanished the presence

that made it dear; and yet—and yet—there was a power in the long-familiar scenes.

There was not, however, any time for hesitation or delay. Harry Dynecourt was in England, and might at almost any moment be arriving at the House. Aunt Farr was prepared for Leslie's reception. Leslie herself, having nearly completed her arrangements, was ready to leave Dynecourt on the following morning. Somewhat over-ready, and having no needful employment for the last empty hours, she wandered aimlessly into what had been her mother's morning-room for nearly twenty years, and sat down by the window, whence she could see a large part of the domain that would be home no more.

The Chestnut avenue, in its first spring loveliness of tender green, particularly attracted her attention. Presently, through the tree-stems, she caught glimpses of an approaching carriage, which she thought was luggage-laden. Perhaps it was Harry Dynecourt. He had not stated the day or hour of his arrival. No carriage had been ordered to meet him. But this was about the time at which a passenger by the afternoon train to Southbridge would be able to arrive at Dynecourt. In another minute Leslie saw that a somewhat shabby vehicle had drawn up at the hall. It was probably a fly from the "Dragon," at Southbridge. It must be Mr. Dynecourt. Leslie has devoutly hoped that he would not arrive until after her departure on the morrow. She tried to console herself: it would be as well to get the meeting over. Yet she dreaded the interview. How deeply Harry Dynecourt himself could never have guessed when, half an hour later, he was shown into the shy presence which self-command and a certain innate elevation of mind combined to render dignified, if not august.

They greeted each other without effusion. "I am grieved to seem to be turning you out, Miss Dering," Dynecourt said presently. He was grieved. He had never thought of it before; and, if Leslie had left ere his arrival, he would probably not have thought of it now.

When he had parted with his cousin—but, indeed, they were but distantly related, and the cousinship need hardly be insisted on—she was a child, scarce five years old. Between the fair-haired plaything of his youth and this gracious, shapely maiden, with auburn hair and soft gray eyes, shy but candid, small but finely-moulded features, and royal swan neck, he could trace no resemblance, and was impressed accordingly. He felt a real regret.

"It is all as it should be," she answered gently. "I go to Aunt Farr's to-morrow morning. Did you notice a long, low, white house, with a green verandah, on your left, as you turned round the corner at the foot of the hill? That is Myrtle Lodge—Aunt Farr's house—my future home."

"It is very nice," Dynecourt absently observed. But he did not believe it was half nice enough for such a lovely occupant.

"As you have come to-day," says Leslie, presently, "I can give you up the keys. I believe there ought to be a sort of ceremony about the keys. Mrs. Richards said she could not think of receiving them—I must give them up to you. Perhaps you remember Richards? She has been 'in the family' forty years, and I am sure she is most devoted to it—and to all its branches," adds Leslie, with a little quiver of the lip, as she remembers all the service of love that has been given to her mother and herself in her cousin's home.

"It is of no consequence about the keys, Miss Dering."

"But you must have them, you know; and there cannot

be a better time for giving them up to you." Leslie takes a small key from her watch-chain, with which she opens a leather box that is standing on the table. From this she takes two bunches of keys-on rings. "These," she says (and her voice again shakes a little), "are the housekeeping keys; and these are the general keys. That is what Richards calls them," she explains, with a smile. "I don't know what they belong to, but I dare say you will find out."

It now occurs to Dynecourt that it will give him something to do for an hour to go and look round the house, choosing those portions of it, under Mrs. Richards' direction, in which Leslie is not likely to be disturbed. There is a slight restraint upon their intercourse, so far. Dynecourt feels a little like a truculent cuckoo thrusting some tender sparrow from her nest. And the *rôle* constrains him.

He remembers one old key, he tells Leslie. "This belongs to the large iron chest in the library. Once your father opened that chest for me, when I was a boy, to show me some of its treasures. I never saw inside it but that once. I don't remember his showing me the diamonds. I dare say they are there, though?" There is a tone of interrogation; but on this matter Leslie is hopelessly vague.

"I don't know—perhaps—as you like," is the gist of the information she supplies him with.

As it happens, the diamonds are a somewhat valuable collection of stones which has been the property of the Dynecourts for many generations. Until lately it has been the impression of Mr. Bristowe, the family solicitor, that the costly heirloom is in the safe custody of Sir Gregory Pawkes and Company, the Dynecourt bankers, with a considerable quantity of gold and silver plate. But on perusing a duplicate inventory of these articles, which he has in his office,

after hearing of Dynecourt's intended return, he has found no mention of the diamonds; and, when he forwarded to the heir a list of the property at Sir Gregory Pawkes', he alluded to this circumstance, adding, that the jewels must, he supposed, be at Dynecourt House.

But for this intimation, only received this morning, the diamonds would not have entered Harry Dynecourt's mind; and it is not now with a large interest in the matter that he starts upon his tour of inspection—to fill up the time.

Some hours elapsed before Dynecourt and Leslie met again. An hour in the library, half an hour in the picture-room, and a short, aimless wandering about the staircase and the rooms in which Miss Dering was not likely to be, brought the Master of Dynecourt to the end of his indoor patience; after which a stroll about the park and a visit to the nearly empty stables brought him rather more pleasantly to dinner-time. During the *tête-à-tête* meal, he and Leslie grew better acquainted, and the little irksomeness of their first meeting passed away.

When Dynecourt entered the drawing-room before dinner, it seemed to Leslie that his face wore an expression different to what she had noticed there before. It did not amount to displeasure, yet she could not think he was pleased. She did not venture to look up again for some moments; but, when he constrained her to do so, under the candour of her glance all that had been slightly repelling in his own immediately melted away. Nor did it return for an hour, during which they sat together at the great dining-table, that looked like a soft oasis of light in the desert of old oak carving with which the room was dim.

As they sat there—Leslie in her simple mourning-dress, with some soft white furbelows about her neck and arms, and

Dynecourt not ill set off by the much-abused nineteenth century dinner-dress—it might seem a pity that the sparrow had need to be turned out of the nest so soon. There was such ample room for those two where both were so truly at home. They looked so well together. Between a man and a woman contrast is pleasing. Harry Dynecourt's irregularly cut features, and somewhat heavy brow; his dark brown, short-cut hair; his penetrating, deep-set eyes, so dark that their gray looked black, especially by lamp-light; his square frame and commanding stature, not to be lost sight of in any posture—were at every point a contrast with the delicacy of Leslie Dering's contour.

As she grew more and more friendly with this far-off cousin, Leslie's manner warmed into a sunny sweetness as different to the enforced composure of that with which she received him, as June roses are to the prim, though beautiful, bloom of the chestnuts. No longer she regretted the absence of Aunt Farr, who had been duly apprized of Mr. Dynecourt's home-coming, but had friends at her own home that evening.

"Shall I put them off, Leslie, dear?" Aunt Farr had inquired. "They are invited expressly to-night, because of your coming to-morrow, you know; and I cannot have visitors while you are in such deep mourning. But I will put them off, if you wish it."

"Certainly not, Aunt Farr," had been Leslie's quiet reply. And now, in the midst of her soreness of heart, she was conscious of a feeling that was other than soreness—as though a cool hand were applied to an aching head. She no longer thought of her loneliness.

Suddenly, at the end of dinner, all the freshness and sweetness melted away.

"The diamonds are not in the iron safe, Miss Dering.

Can you not recall their whereabouts? By the way, did your mother wear them?"

"What diamonds, Mr. Dynecourt? But mother never wore any diamonds, except this ring. I am going to have some of her hair plaited into this."

"I am thinking of the Dynecourt diamonds."

She fancies there is sternness in his voice; and, looking up, surprises that glance again, of dissatisfaction—can it be of *distrust*?

Perhaps it amounts to this. It does not amount to suspicion. The fact is, Harry Dynecourt has been unable to find the diamonds in any place where he would suppose them likely to be. He has questioned Mrs. Richards, who declared she had never clapped eyes on them since his late mother's time, and knows nothing of where they were sent to at her death. Dynecourt remembers Leslie's manner of speaking of this old servant, and reflects that her attachment is possibly weaned from the lineal descendant of the House. His doubt is of the dead; and he is dimly aware that, as such, it may never find an utterance. As to Leslie, of course, she is innocent. But if her mother has been reduced to straits, and has, for instance, parted with the family jewels, would Leslie, however guiltless, be likely to betray a knowledge of the act? Thus he ponders.

But the girl's face, when she looks up distressfully, once more completely disarms him. Sad thoughts are awakened in Leslie by mention of her mother's ring; which, with the sense of some uncomprehended reproach in Dynecourt's tone (of which he is wholly unconscious), give to her eyes a pathos that only the most cruel could withstand. Dynecourt is far from cruel; and the eyes not only soften his own and take the harshness from his voice, but convince him for the time

that, if the diamonds have been stolen, Leslie has not even an accidental knowledge of the theft.

"I never heard of the Dynecourt diamonds," she says in a low, sad tone.

"It's of no consequence at all, Miss Dering! I dare say they may turn up some day." His voice is pleasant and cheery now. Nevertheless, when, a few minutes later, he retires to the garden or the smoking-room, to enjoy a lonely pipe, Leslie goes up to her room with a sense of failure in her sorrowful young heart; of there being another burden laid on the shoulders that she thought overlaid already. There had come such a sudden spring of unconscious hope—a feeling as if sorrow were not eternal—and now it had all vanished as suddenly as it had come.

It was wrong, Leslie reflected, to have entertained any thought that was not of grief. The wrong was quickly avenged; and the tears shed that night for her late bereavement were more bitter than ever before.



CHAPTER II.

If she be false, oh, then, Heaven mocks itself!

AT breakfast on the following morning Mr. Dynecourt and Leslie met again almost as strangers. But a few hours were now to elapse before Leslie's departure. In a pause Leslie had nearly the courage to ask Mr. Dynecourt if he dreamed of the diamonds? But an impulse, fortunate or otherwise, withheld the words and smile, and preserved the solemn gravity of the occasion.

Presently Leslie has wandered out to say a farewell word to the dogs and ponies. In the garden Dynecourt finds her, fastening the chain round the neck of the great retriever; while a happy little terrier, in the enjoyment of liberty, is trotting round her feet, not wholly unconscious of an impending catastrophe.

"Quiet, Gyp! Quiet! I must fasten your chain. You cannot come for a longer walk this morning. I am going away, Gyp. I am sorry to leave you. I am sorry—— Oh, Mr. Dynecourt! I did not see you. I am saying good-bye to the dogs, and the ponies, and the cows."

"Yes," says the heir, with a guiltier feeling than ever. "But won't you take them with you? Isn't there anything you would like to take?"

"I won't take them all, thank you," says Leslie gravely. "The little gray dog, Toby, you know—this is Toby," lifting him up in her arms. "He is one of the Dynecourt dogs; but he has always been called mine. I thought I might—that you would not mind—that——"

"Good Heaven, Miss Dering! You cannot have thought my permission was needed to take anything you liked. Your own dog, too! But anything—anything you would like, you are more than welcome to."

Mr. Dynecourt was stung. Probably his conscience was to blame; but he could not help feeling that in Leslie's remark, that Toby was one of the Dynecourt dogs, there might have been some intentional reproduction of his phrase concerning the diamonds. It was not likely. Why should she object to the phrase? Of course, he had not permitted his suspicion to appear! He could not have been such a brute. It was ridiculous. Mr. Dynecourt dismissed the thought; and, when Leslie had quietly thanked him for per-

mission to carry away her little favourite, he began a conversation on dogs in general, and told her of one of his own in particular—a mastiff, that had come with him from India, and was now with some friends he had been visiting near London, but was to arrive with them at Dynecourt on the following day. A mastiff? He must be a beautiful creature! What were his name, and age, and peculiarities? Leslie took so sincere an interest in hearing of Dynecourt's dog, that they were fast becoming friendly again, while he answered her questions, and enlarged on the fine nature of an animal he believed, like a dutiful master, to be beyond praise.

"Rupert is wiser than other dogs, Miss Dering, as well as handsomer than most. He has a keener perception of honesty than any dog I have ever known. Nothing could bribe him to have dealings with any one less than trustworthy. He would flatly refuse to give his hand—or paw, if you like—to any one who had the least dishonour in his mind. He has often been tried. He never failed me; and I would take his word before any man's."

Leslie regards him. "Would not that be somewhat hard on the man, Mr. Dynecourt?"

"Not on an *honest* one, Miss Dering. Ru would never deceive me! He could not. It is a more unerring instinct than I could have thought was possible."

"How I should like to see Ru, Mr. Dynecourt!" says Leslie. "I hope you will bring him with you when you come to Aunt Farr's," she unaffectedly adds.

"I certainly will, if you wish it. You are fond of dogs, Miss Dering?"

"Little Toby!" Leslie remarks—not with entire irrelevance, yet hardly intending a reply, and gently presses to her heart her one tried friend. Soon after this they parted.

Followed a diligent search for the Dynecourt diamonds. He was bound to find them now, Dynecourt thought, for Leslie Dering's sake. Now that her sweet and honest-seeming presence was withdrawn, he realized the truth that he could not, without proof, put entire confidence in her ignorance of their fate. Yet there were moments when he felt it equally impossible to doubt. The thing must be cleared up, if a vigorous search at Dynecourt could do it. But it could not. At the end of a week not a trace of the missing heirloom had been discovered.

Meanwhile Leslie was slowly realizing the difficult point of her position. At Dynecourt an intercourse that was likely to be neighbourly, and had promised to be pleasant, was suddenly overshadowed as with the chill and dampness of a cloud. Why, Leslie had not inquired at the time. She felt the doubt that was in Dynecourt's mind—felt, but not analyzed or comprehended it. What was it that gave a sudden coldness to his look, a tone of severity to his voice, that were doubly galling from the forlornness of Leslie's condition? She perceived that he was vexed about the diamonds, that he considered she ought to furnish him with some particulars concerning them. But it did not come home to her heart, till some time after she had left his house, that the master of Dynecourt connected the thought of her and her lost mother with the disappearance of the family jewels. Little by little the significance of the few words he had spoken about them returned to her memory. He had asked if Mrs. Dering ever wore them? Clearly he thought that she and Leslie were aware of their existence. Then, the shadow on his face when he met her after the first search, and its recurrence when the subject was alluded to, meant, by a logical conclusion, that he suspected her of participation

in a theft! She would not gloss over the matter now. He suspected her—and her dead mother. How angry she ought to feel! How bitterly and in strength her pride should arise against the vile slur that this stranger dared in his heart to cast on their fair fame!

But there was in Leslie's nature an innate sense of justice that prevented the perception of personal wrong from blinding her to whatever might be the extenuating points in the case of an opponent. That he was a stranger and her mother unknown, were, after all, facts that told for him, and against herself. That the diamonds ought to have been at Dyne-court, and were not forthcoming; that, if there, it was probable that Mrs. Dering would have been aware of it, and her daughter had denied all knowledge of the matter—not straightforwardly, as brought to the bar of inquiry and justice, but with a carelessness and abstraction she now well remembered, and which might seem to have been assumed for the purpose of evasion; these things had all to be considered and set down over against the injury done to herself and her mother's memory by a shameful suspicion. These, and the fact that he had not wished to make his doubt known to her—had evidently striven to conceal it.

And then, Leslie was alone, so far as sympathy and vital interest went, and the need of a friendship nearer than any existing tie, and more congenial than that of the cousins with whom she was newly domesticated, clamoured to be felt and understood. Leslie did understand it, but hardly knew that it was this very need that softened her heart to Harry Dyne-court. The void might have been filled by his brotherly-kindness; therefore his coolness wounded more than it stung. His holding aloof with a cruel doubt in his heart would add sorrow to sorrow, but would hardly arouse in her

the resentment which might have been felt by one who was indifferent to his good opinion.

If there was meanness in this failure of her pride to assert itself, Leslie was hardly answerable for it. It was not by reasoning out the matter that she came to find herself yearning to dispel the suspicion in Dynecourt's heart—yearning with a deeply sorrowful sense of her own loss in his displeasure, and not with indignant repudiation of his want of faith in her integrity. It was the instinct of her nature. It was pride in its last resort of pained humility. "I have no right to condemn him for what seems to him a reasonable doubt." So far the justice of her reasoning powers. "I do not condemn the judgment of a mind I would adore, and the impulse of a heart I long to love." Thus the similar, but less logical, conclusion of the unconscious working of her heart.

It was more than a week before Dynecourt availed himself of Leslie's simply-expressed invitation to present himself at Aunt Farr's. In the meantime he and Leslie had met more than once. On these occasions Leslie had preserved the gentle dignity of manner that was habitual to her. She always asked Dynecourt if he had found the diamonds, and always fancied she observed the same shadow on his face when he answered in the negative. The mastiff was never with him when they met.

"Has Rupert come home, Mr. Dynecourt?" Leslie asked one day. And this question following immediately on the accustomed allusion to the diamonds, the idea suddenly flashed into Dynecourt's brain that the dog might be made use of in the matter. Ru was at home. Ru's instinct was unerring. Why might not Leslie Dering's honour be put to the test of his sagacity? But at once all that was generous in Harry Dynecourt's nature revolted from the thought.

"Wouldn't it be rather hard on the man?" Leslie had asked him, when he declared that he would trust Ru before the word of any man. And it might be hard, indeed, to subject to the intelligent scrutiny of so unfailing a censor, this fair young girl, whose only fault (if fault there were) was possibly that of keeping tender, if not lawful, guard over the secret of her mother's dishonour.

So Dynecourt dismissed the idea of making Rupert his councillor, and delayed yet a little his visit to the long, low, white house with the green verandah where Leslie was ensconced. But when every nook and corner of the house had been searched, under his own supervision, for the missing jewels, and they were nowhere found, he determined to refer to them never again, and to let Leslie perceive when she questioned him next that the subject was done with for ever. In this mood he set out for Aunt Farr's. He had purposely abstained, while hope lasted, from seeking an interview with Leslie till the diamonds should be found, and he could go to her with a free heart, giving her the information which he felt she was thirsting to obtain.

Only, if she *knew* that the diamonds could not be found! Well, if she did, the knowledge would trouble her more than he would ever suffer it to disturb himself. When every cranny had been searched, he would give up the heirloom and let Leslie Dering enjoy a furtive appreciation of the simpleness which had instituted the search. He knew she would not enjoy it. Most ardently did he long to acquit her wholly at the bar of his own heart. Every time they met he looked in her clear grey eyes, and held them true. When doubt in absence once more forced itself upon him, he renewed with fresh vigour the unavailing quest. It was justice, he thought, impelled him. Perhaps it was Leslie

Dering's eyes. But now it was over. He could make no further effort to clear her; and they must both accept the situation as best they might.

When he called at Aunt Farr's, that lady with two of her children and Leslie were seated in the long, rather low-ceiled, drawing-room, outside which were the green verandah and the climbing myrtles. Mrs. Farr had, also, some afternoon visitors, a neighbouring dowager and her son, whom she was entertaining, and whose calls upon Leslie's attention were a somewhat obvious weariness and vexation to the boy and girl on whose play with cousin Leslie they had inopportunately broken in.

After a few words exchanged with Aunt Farr, Dynecourt drew nearer to Leslie and began to make friends, as he well could, with the two children who surrounded her.

"Have you brought the dog, Mr. Dynecourt? You promised to bring Rupert to show us, didn't you?"

Yes, Dynecourt had promised to show Ru to Leslie, and he had brought him; but, for reasons he did not explain and which he tried himself to make light of, he had forbidden the dog to cross the threshold of the door.

"Oh, Aunt Farr! Mr. Dynecourt has brought Ru—the wise dog I told you of. Will you not ask him to call him in?"

"If he is a large mastiff, as you told me, Leslie," says Aunt Farr, smiling affectedly, "he will hardly find room in my little place. But pray bring him in, Mr. Dynecourt! Leslie wishes to see him, and so do I. I am doatingly fond of animals."

Leslie catches a smile on Dynecourt's face as he goes to fetch Ru, and concludes that he experiences a sense of incongruity in the idea of Aunt Farr's doting fondness,

and that of the proposed object of it whom he is bidden to bring in.

The hall-door is standing wide. A pleasant scent from the lilac-trees penetrates to the drawing-room whenever its door is unclosed. Rupert is stretched at full length on the wide door-step, which he fills. Perhaps he is impervious to the odour of lilacs. At all events, he has fallen asleep. Dynecourt has only to open the door of the drawing-room and enunciate the syllable "Ru," and immediately, though slowly, the great creature rises from the step and sways with a soft yet heavy tread over the tiled hall up to his master, who ushers him into the room, in which, perhaps on account of an unaccustomed presence, there really does not seem much room left.

"He will shake hands, Aunt Farr," Leslie announces.

Dynecourt bitterly repents having told her this, but perceives that the play will have to be acted out. He is too gravely convinced of Rupert's infallibility to regard the fact with indifference. Rupert, on invitation, solemnly places his right hand in that of Aunt Farr. Harry Dynecourt strokes his moustache, and ponders. But in no case is any impression of his own to be weighed against the fiat of Ru.

"Shake hands with me!" exclaim Herbert and Clara Farr incisively, in a breath; and Ru complies with alacrity, disposing of Clara's hand to accommodate Herbert, with as much haste as is consistent with his notion of decent sobriety. When the dowager and her stripling have also been honoured with an opportunity of grasping as much as they can hold of the huge paw that Ru is adjured to extend to them, they rise and depart.

After the leave-taking Dynecourt endeavours to divert the ladies' thoughts, but is unsuccessful.

"It is my turn now," says Leslie. "He has not shaken hands with me."

Rupert is now on his haunches, with his fore-feet planted firmly on the rug; his back is to the room, his face turned towards the grate, in which a small fire is burning, but he does not regard it. His head is thrown slightly back, and his great black muzzle is lifted in the air as if with a solemn despute. Yet his eyes are slowly shutting, and perhaps he is in verity more disposed to slumber than to contempt. Leslie approaches him; her heart beats fast with the anticipation of triumph, rather than with fear of a defeat; yet the moment is trying, and Ru's attitude not one of encouragement.

"Shake hands with me, Rupert!" says Leslie timidly. She is kneeling on the rug and holding out her hand with a look of appeal that would be ludicrous if it were not pathetic and Dynecourt's face not so grave. Rupert sniffs, but otherwise stirs not.

"Oh, Ru! Ru!" cries Leslie with deep reproach; and to some further advances there is heard the response of a low growl.

"Pray don't provoke him, Miss Dering! I don't think he'll hurt you, but I would rather you came away."

Then arises a clamour from Aunt Farr and the children: "Oh, Leslie! don't!" "Oh, cousin Leslie!" "Oh!" "Come away!" "Come away!" "You hear Mr. Dynecourt, Leslie! Pray don't provoke the brute!"

"Wait a minute, Aunt Farr! *Do* be quiet, Bertie and Clare! Please let me try him again, Mr. Dynecourt! He thought I was afraid. Dogs can't bear frightened people, can they? And he didn't smell my hand. Dogs like to know first by smelling, don't they? Please smell my hand

again!" to Ru, while she passes her slender hand over his great black nose and down the silky softness of his tawny jowl, and then beseechingly extends it for him to shake. This time Ru's demonstration is unmistakable. He does not growl. His name spoken by Dynecourt in a certain tone has, perhaps, arrested him. Leslie is kneeling on his right. He deliberately withdraws his left fore-leg sideways away from her, follows it up with the other, and remains in the same position in which she found him—head erect, nostrils dilated—but with his back to her and his face turned to Aunt Farr, who is sitting opposite Leslie with her back to the verandah.

"Does he *always* shake hands with *proper* people, Mr. Dynecourt?" cries Leslie, with tears in her voice.

"He is very sagacious, Miss Dering," says Dynecourt, smiling in spite of himself; "I never knew him at fault before."

There is just enough pause between the two last words of his sentence to make Leslie's heart sink. She returns to her seat, and the conversation is chiefly carried on between Dynecourt and Aunt Farr.

Presently occurred an unexpected movement on the part of the wise dog. If dogs have consciences—and who can doubt it?—Ru's was probably troubled. In his usual leisurely manner he stretched himself out on the hearthrug, first rising and turning round, so that his head in this new position touched Leslie's dress. Leslie, hardly breathing, softly patted her knee with her right hand. Rupert accepted the gesture, and, with yet more of his grand slow movements, drew himself up into a sitting posture till his head was nearly on a level with Leslie's, who sat on a very low chair. Then, Leslie caressing him, Ru condescended to bend his head

over her knee, and finally kissed the hand that was lying there.

"Ru, dear Ru!" whispered Leslie; "won't you shake hands with me, now?" Ru is not a dog for half-measures. He ponderously laid his big foot in the hand that was once more held down to meet it, not desisting from softly toying with his tongue with the other hand, still lying on Leslie's knee.

It is a moment of, perhaps, unreasonable triumph. Leslie glances across the room and meets Dynecourt's eye. In a moment she knows he has been following the movements of the dog, and has noted all. Then takes place an influx of the younger children from the nursery. They close round Leslie, "who meekly yields, and is obscured, content with one calm triumph of a modest pride."

There is a light in Leslie's eye and a joyful note in her voice when Dynecourt takes his leave which he does not remember to have seen and heard before. When Leslie gives him her hand, she also is conscious of a revelation—in the firm and gentle pressure of his own, which would not, she knows, have clasped hers more warmly than usual had Rupert's not lain there first.

CHAPTER III.

*Je suis riche, et beaucoup ;
Car l'amour, oui, l'amour tient lieu de tout.*

AS soon as Dynecourt was outside Myrtle Lodge he gave way to an internal transport of pleasure which would have appeared to some people as unwarrantable as

Leslie's sensation of triumph when Ru shook hands with her. Certainly Ru's demonstration had been marked ; and Leslie had so longed to give Dynecourt some proof of her innocence, that she would have regarded as valuable one far less potent than this. The worth of this one she estimated by the force of Dynecourt's expression of faith in the wisdom of his tawny-haired friend. For once, expectation was realized. Dynecourt's present experience was consistent with the terms in which he had described his confidence in Ru before the event.

Ru was always secure of his master's affection, but was, by his sixth sense, assured of it on this occasion more conclusively than ever before. Dynecourt's inward attitude towards him was one of speechless gratitude for the noble way in which he had given evidence of a repentance that did not come too late. His previous withdrawal had been strange. It must have been, in some way which was not in Dynecourt's experience of him, a reflection of the unworthy suspicion that clouded his master's heart. This gave a deeper meaning to his retraction, coming as it did at a moment when his master's reliance on the girl's unspotted honour had sunk to zero.

Dynecourt rejoiced to have his doubts resolved without any effort of his own ; and it was not for some time that he began to consider if an effort on his own part might not have been becoming.

After much elation in the thought that at the very time when he had given up the search for the diamonds as hopeless in itself and not worth further prosecution, he was enabled also to renounce that particular form of doubt which had made him pursue it for so long, a review of his own position in the matter forced itself upon his mind. He

recalled the joyous look in Leslie's eyes as she parted from him; and at last the perception was brought home to him that he must have allowed her to observe that his heart was not whole in her regard. He had not intended to show a suspicion to Leslie—had hardly been conscious of feeling one, except when removed from the influence of her presence; but whence, then, her unmistakable relief in the happy application of a test by which he had declared himself invariably bound? Leslie had noticed his doubt. She was innocently overjoyed by the prospect of its being recalled. A generous impulse caused him to feel more sorrow in the first, than gladness in the second discovery. Only a certain inherent laziness, causing him to be slow of thought, had before prevented his taking Leslie's feelings into more serious consideration. Awakened now to a sense of the cruel injustice of his former aspect towards her, he reproached himself; but would have done so more keenly had he not reflected that it requires an intelligence more than human to pass unerring judgment on all the affairs of life.

This intelligence is possessed by Ru.

Meanwhile Leslie is radiant. She has never reproached him in her heart. It would be idle folly to do so now. Aunt Farr observes the dispersion of the grief-clouds, and connects it with the appearance of Harry Dynecourt on the scene. She is not quite sure how far it is becoming to be lighthearted in conjunction with crape material. The children, who are enjoying a protracted holiday on account of the late change in their mother's residence, reap the full benefit of Leslie's accession of spirits. Herbert remarks that "cousin Leslie was always good-natured, even when she was *sober*"—he has no words to express the charms of her present condition, but leaves the rest to the imagination of his hearers.

“Bertie, what things you do say!” mildly expostulates Aunt Farr.

But, however troubled Aunt Farr may have been by a sense of the unbecoming on the part of her young cousin, it was by no means her intention to let the occasion slip.

“It will be nice to have Dynecourt for a neighbour,” she remarked to Leslie; who assented lightly, having taken the fact of his neighbourhood as a matter that required no comment. “But I mean a neighbourly neighbour,” Aunt Farr insisted. Yes, that would be nice, Leslie could not deny it.

But the progress to this desired end was not exactly a rapid one. Aunt Farr made the next advance, and invited Dynecourt to dinner. He came. Only Leslie was in the drawing-room on his arrival. Unaware that the search was abandoned, she inquired if the jewels had come to light. Dynecourt did not reply, and their eyes met. He laughed a little, and then Leslie laughed too. For the moment they understood one another. But, as Dynecourt still omitted to mention that the subject was henceforth banished, and that he had fully determined to seek the lost heirloom no more, there were after-times in which the old doubt recurred to Leslie, and tortured her. When some small, nameless shadow fell on their intercourse, such as too often troubles friendship, and especially when it begins to take on a warmer hue, Leslie attributed Dynecourt’s share in it to the missing diamonds, and believed that some fruitlessly renewed endeavour to find them had ended by recalling doubts of her to his mind. He could, then, fail to confide in Rupert’s judgment, after all? Leslie considered it possible. She was mistaken; but it is doubtful if any spoken assurance from Harry Dynecourt would have been more effectual to prevent the error than the look that had passed from his heart into her

own. At that moment words were felt to be superfluous ; and, so expressive is soul-language, even under earthly conditions, that it is probable no words that might then have been spoken would have reassured Leslie half so well at the time, or gone further towards keeping her heart up under subsequent cause for inquietude.

On the whole, affairs hardly progressed to Aunt Farr's satisfaction. She wisely abstained from comment ; but began to fear lest the occasional coolness which she observed in Leslie's manner to Dynecourt, or in his to her, and which she did not at first regard as a "bad sign," might be destined to grow into a state of indifference which was very far removed from her desires. It would be nice to have Dynecourt for a "neighbourly neighbour ;" but it would be doubly so if her cousin could be mistress of Dynecourt House, and she might shine with reflected lustre from that fair abode.

A certain intimacy had gradually become established between the houses. On one occasion, when there was a tacit understanding that Dynecourt would meet the Farris with Leslie Dering at a spot of interest in the neighbourhood which they proposed to visit, Mrs. Farr was unreasonably perturbed by his non-appearance. Leslie, with the old shadow heavy on her heart, discoursed on the view and romped with the children in a way that imposed on Aunt Farr. Really this was too like indifference on either side. The misadventure was capable of easy explanation ; but as none was ever asked, at least by Leslie, she never chanced to hear that a telegram had summoned Dynecourt to London on some business matter the very morning of the ramble, from which he had been so sorely missed. He, on his part, having made no verbal engagement, now sought to make no

excuse. And so the sad occasions multiplied on which poor Leslie's heart ached in silence for a fancied wrong.

This was a state of things which failed not to make itself felt in Leslie's bearing towards Dynecourt. With his usual slowness of thought, it was late in the summer before he intimately studied the question. When he did so, matters arranged themselves. Why had Leslie Dering appeared—nay, why was she really so glad when his brutal doubts of her honour were removed by Ru's magnanimity? And, since she was so glad, why was she now so cold?

Dynecourt had never held the great house in high estimation since that night when Leslie and he had sat at one end of the great table together, growing more and more friendly in their talk and manner, till he thought of those miserable stones; just after that, he remembered, Leslie rose. Since that day he had come to feel that not only Dynecourt House, but life itself, would be of little worth without her gentle presence. How had she come to feel? Would she not be glad to return to her childhood's home? Not that he wronged her by believing she could own one mercenary thought. But he was modest enough to hope that old, doubtless sweet, associations might be reckoned in his favour, lest of personal recommendation he had not sufficient for success. As to that, he was now determined to put his chances to the proof.

On the occasion of his doing so, he had found Leslie alone in the garden belonging to Myrtle Lodge. From her favourite seat, under a walnut-tree, you can just see the chimneys of Dynecourt House.

"It is so desolate over there, at the big house," Dynecourt was telling her, "without you."

"Without *me*, Mr. Dynecourt!"

"Oh, yes, Leslie! It is. I have never cared for it a bit since the first day—when we were there together."

There was a little pause. Perhaps Dynecourt thought she would look at him, or say a word, or make some sign, before he must proceed. He was sitting on the grass beside her chair, and he took to himself a hand that lay idle on her knee. She did not look at him, or move; but she spoke, with strong emotion. This is what she said:—

"Oh, Mr. Dynecourt! I *wish* you had found the diamonds!"

"Nonsense, darling! The diamonds be—hanged! I wish they were, about your neck. Come home, and help me find them!"

Leslie went home; but she has never found the diamonds. Their disappearance remains unexplained. It is now but a subject of tender jesting between Harry Dynecourt and his wife. As for Rupert, Leslie adores him. "I owe," she says, "all my happiness on earth to Ru." Dynecourt smiles, but does not deny the implication. He declares that Ru has made in his life only one mistake, and that was when he experienced a momentary hesitation in giving his hand to the sweetest, the purest, the truest-hearted woman in the world.

Trust.

Words by BARBARA WORDSWORTH.
Andante cantabile. ♩=66.

Music by ARTHUR H. BROWN.



X mp

1. Tho' there were of-fered me of ev - 'ry trea - sure Hid in the earth or garnered
2. Dear are the lips of summer, the be - lov - ed, Sweet are her kiss - es that our

The first system of the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The vocal line is on a single staff, and the piano accompaniment is on two staves. The music is in G major and 4/4 time. The piano part features a steady accompaniment of eighth notes in the right hand and chords in the left hand.

in the sea, Gold with-out stint and jew-els be-yond mea - sure,
pain re - move : None is so sweet as doubt of thee re - mov - ed,

The second system of the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The vocal line continues with the lyrics. The piano accompaniment maintains the same harmonic support.

f con espres.

All would I give, might I but trust in thee, All would I give, might I but
Nought is so dear as per-fect faith in love, Nought is so dear as per-fect

f con espres.

The final system of the vocal melody and piano accompaniment. The vocal line concludes with the lyrics. The piano accompaniment features a more active role with moving lines in both hands, marked with a forte (f) dynamic and a 'con espres.' (con espressione) instruction.

TRUST.

con moto. $\text{♩} = 116.$

mf

trust in thee.
faith in love.

Trust ye the
Trust ye the

con moto.

mf

cres.

false, Ere ye doubt of the true! Give, and it shall be gi - ven to
false, Lest ye doubt of the true! Fill, that your measure be me - ted to

cres.

f

rall. cres.

you! Trust ye the false, Ere ye doubt of the true! Give, and it
you! Trust ye the false, Lest ye doubt of the true! Fill, that your

f

rall.

ad lib.

shall be gi - ven to you! *à te n'o.*
measure be me - ted to you!

col canto. *f* *dim.* X

T R U S T.

THO' there were offered me of every treasure
Hid in the earth or garnered in the sea,
Gold without stint and jewels beyond measure,
All would I give for confidence in thee.

“ Trust ye the false
Ere ye doubt of the true !
Give and it shall
Be given to you.”

Dear are the lips of Summer the belovèd,
Sweet are her kisses that our pain remove ;
None is so sweet as doubt of thee removèd—
Nought is so dear as perfect faith in love.

“ Trust ye the false,
Lest ye doubt of the true !
Fill, that your measure
Be meted to you !”



A E I.

FIRST HOUR, AT ST. MICHAEL'S GATE.

The Lady protests too much, methinks.



THE Church of St. Michael-in-the-Wood is the centre of one of the daintiest bits of English scenery it has been my lot to know. The wood by which it is embowered winds for a considerable distance round the foot of a gentle hill. The meadow-lands by which you approach the spot from the town are in their highest perfection at the end of May and in the leafy month of June, when they are golden with buttercups and dashed with sorrel crimson in the sun. Beech and oak trees of vigorous growth are plentiful in the meads. Away in the west, on your right as you advance towards St. Michael's, is a vision of blue sea, far below. On the left are more hills, higher than the green slope behind the wood, and fading off into

shades of misty blue. Over it all, if you have a deep-hued cloudless sky, making the gold more golden, and the blue more blue, and deepening the rich soft shadiness of green, you need only to be within sight and sound of the little river, falling away westward with low, soft ripples of laughter to the sea, to admit that the scene, if not faultless, at least is passing fair.

Following the church-path over the meadow-land, you arrive at the entrance to the wood. Here stands a long white swing-gate, which is a frequent trysting-place for the townspeople and the inhabitants of the village below the hill. It has come to be called St. Michael's Gate—in the same way that the woodland goes by the name of St. Michael's Copse; and the softly sloping hill beyond is known, by the natives, as St. Michael's Mound. The gate is about half-way between the town of Arranwelly and the little village on the sea level, which skirts the foot of the southern side of the Mound. Therefore it is convenient to the dwellers in both these places. The road by which vehicles of all sorts must pass from Arranwelly to the village is about a mile further round. Yet the church-path is not by way of being a thoroughfare between them. That is to say, for many a quiet hour of the work-a-day two leisurely gossips might enjoy a lounge by the gate, disturbed, if at all, by not more than one or two straggling wayfarers in the course of the sixty minutes. At sunset, perhaps, there is more traffic at the gate. But at five o'clock on a summer's afternoon—ah! that is the hour for a quiet talk, or a golden silence in a twofold solitude, with only the birds—and they a-drowsing—to break the mellowed stillness of the time.

At such an hour Philip Dudley and Mary Holt are standing under the grand old tree that throws its majestic

shadow widely around St. Michael's Gate. Mr. Dudley is staying with his father, the Squire of Arranwelly, and has come from the town, over the blooming table-land, to meet Miss Holt at the entrance to the copse. Miss Holt has come from the village, whence the path skirts the woodland and leads up to the gate, still from the outer side, but in the opposite direction to that by which the church-path from Arranwelly conducts to the same spot. So that, to enter the copse at this end, travellers from both town and village must pass through St. Michael's Gate; whence a narrow wood-path, kept for a short distance heedfully trim, leads them to the little church—old, beautiful, gray-green—only the tower of which, although it stands so near, is visible from the gate.

Behind the church is the loveliest of country churchyards, looking east up to the hills, and westward down to the sea. Here the graves are kept sweetly blooming, in what I have seen called (I wonder why? It is the only thing the writer ever said that makes me wonder) "the hideous attempt to hide death in the garments of life." I, for my part, also acknowledging Death's labour of decay to be the natural and kindly helping on of the ceaseless progress from death unto life, can find no better means of showing myself to be at one with his holy endeavour than to bury the unsightly part of it, and cover it with flowers.

Mary Holt is the late vicar's daughter. With his widow, her step-mother, she dwells in the little village on what the townspeople call "the other side." She has lately promised to become Philip Dudley's wife. There is no possible reason for a clandestine meeting between them; nor is such the character of the present one. But the fact is, Philip Dudley, Esq., R.N., First Lieutenant on board H.M.S. *Erigone*, and the squire's second son, is one of a very large family—eight

of which are young women, between the ages of thirteen and thirty, all requiring portions, and all at present unmarried ; and he is not regarded by Mary's step-mother as an eligible *parti*. The lady has felt called on to sanction the engagement ; but, having allowed herself to cherish a hope of what she would consider a "better establishment" for Miss Holt, her welcome to Philip Dudley never seems to that gentleman a cordial one. This induces a certain restraint in her presence, which extends to the borders of her modest domain. Then, at the Hall, it is impossible to be free of the girls ! Where resides that bevy of damsels—fair, fresh, and noisy, rejoicing over their sailor brother lately home from sea—peace, in the way of seclusion, cannot also dwell. So Philip has said, "If you will be at St. Michael's Gate to-morrow, Mary, about five o'clock, when the girls will be having their tea, I can meet you there, and we shall be alone."

The tryst faithfully kept at the time appointed, under the hoary beech that shades St. Michael's Gate, they stand, a noble pair. The rose-flush tinting Mary Holt's warm brown cheek makes her face the very ideal of dark loveliness. All Mary's colouring, except that of cheek and lips, is brown. Eyes, to be perfect, should be "windows of the soul" indeed. Mary's dark brown, liquid, exactly matching the masses of her glossy, waving hair, are not soul-windows. Probably, in gazing at them, the last thing you would think of would be Mary's soul. You would far more likely remember Keats's Belle dame sans mercy, the "Fairy's child," whose "hair was long, her foot was light, and her eyes were wild." But Mary, also, is "full beautiful ;" and as to the "pale kings," with their "horrid warning," that is a dream which is seldom dreamed until too late, and when the waking is lonely, "on the cold hill-side."

Meanwhile, Philip Dudley, seeing naught but the maiden's beauty, conscious of no feeling but that of his deep love, stands looking down upon her face with his great sea-blue eyes. Her slender hands are clasped in his large, stalwart, sunburnt ones—which are also gentle, being a sailor's hands—and their delicate tint is brown no longer by the side of that which sun and wind have painted on his once fair skin. His sun-gold hair is curly as her own. His face is a face to love. His mien is that of a man it would be well to trust—not so much on the score of worldly wisdom, as for integrity of mind and will.

A long while they have been standing thus beside the gate, though no wayfarer has passed since their arrival. The hush of the June afternoon has not altogether held them speechless. Now, passing in at the gate, they wander as far as the church porch. Here they rest a little, gathering memories of the scene against the time, not far distant, when Philip is to be at sea again. At last comes the moment of parting, and they walk back together to St. Michael's Gate. Lovers' partings are long. This one is twice disturbed: momentarily by an aged woman, who turns from the church-path into the beaten track beyond the gate, which leads to the Other Side, and looks at them as she goes by; and, more roughly, by a party of children, who shout a good deal and take thrice the needful time to clamber over the gate, stare at the lady's white dress, and disperse themselves into the copse.

"I was thinking, Mary, how should I bear it, if anything came between us now?"

"Nothing but death can part us, Philip."

"Nothing but death or you, Mary."

"There is no fear then, darling," says the lady, tenderly.

"Then I will have no fear," he answers, but not with a confidence by which she is satisfied.

"You should not speak as if you could doubt me, Philip."

"No, indeed, Mary! I should deserve that you should despise me if I could be mean enough not to put faith in you." There is no lack of fervour in the words, whatever may be said of the logic in them, and Mary accepts the reassurance graciously.

"Yes," she rejoins; "and though I cannot say, 'Whither thou goest, I will go;' I *can* say, 'The Lord do so to me, and more also, if——'"

"No, no, Mary! I don't want you to make a vow."

"Why not, Philip? How dreadfully superstitious you are! Why should I not make a vow?—or twenty vows, that only concern you and me."

"Well, I am superstitious, if you will. But I do not *like* vows. Other things *may* happen, besides death and unfaithfulness. And it almost seems to me as if—as if you——"

"As if I would *make* something happen, eh? you foolish old man of the sea! Well, I don't care what happens, Philip: it will make no difference to me. I can still say what Ruth said to Naomi——"

"But you will not say it, dear," he tells her, quietly; and Mary is silent. It is noteworthy that any idea of possible change in him is not once mentioned between them.

The allotted hour has long gone by. With her vow only mentally recorded, and with a kiss which Mary feels should be a seal of love so sacred as to need no other bond, she has parted from Philip Dudley, and they have passed on their several ways. Until to-morrow.

SECOND HOUR, AT ST. MICHAEL'S GATE.

O tak' me in ae hour, and syne
I'll gather me, and gang.

BEFORE the picture of Philip Dudley's second trysting-hour at St. Michael's Gate can be intelligible, it will behove me to glance at the events of the intervening time.

When Lieutenant Dudley should have joined his ship at Portsmouth he was lying helpless in a raging fever, at the Hall. From that illness he partially recovered. From his sick-bed he arose a stricken man. But for many days after the *Erigone* had sailed he knew naught of what was passing around him, or far off; raved of Mary; said not a word of the sea; and kept his devoted nurses in terror of his life. For weeks after he knew their voices and was able to talk to them again, they were tortured by the reiterated question: "When shall I see you, Lizzie?" "Doctor, how soon shall I have my sight?" "May, have the doctors told you when they think I shall see again?" At last May Dudley, who best knew her brother's weakness and his strength, asked the physician who attended him, "Doctor, why don't you tell him now?"

"I will take on myself to do so, certainly, Miss May, if I understand it to be your wish."

"It is my wish."

"I should like, also, your father's authority."

"I will myself accept the responsibility, Dr. Gore."

But Dr. Gore would not. "I would like, if you please, Miss Dudley, to hear what are your father's wishes."

Mr. Dudley was crossing the hall. May went to him.

"Father," she said, "Dr. Gore would like your consent to tell poor Phil about his sight."

"Indeed? Yes, yes. Poor lad! Poor lad! And what do *you* think about it, May?"

"I have proposed that he should be told now."

"And what does Lizzie think?"

Here Dr. Gore interposed: "My dear sir, I am about to see the patient, and am ready to communicate to him the sad intelligence, with your authority for doing so," with a slight stress on the possessive pronoun.

"Indeed? Yes, yes. May, my dear, if Lizzie and you think it best?"

"We do, indeed, father." It is doubtful if Miss Dudley had been consulted on this occasion; but in May there was perfect readiness to accept even more than her own share in the onus of decision. "We cannot deceive him any more."

"Certainly. Yes. Pray, sir, act in this matter *exactly as you think best.*"

With this permission, added to a beseeching look from May, and his own unwillingness to debate the question any longer, the doctor ascended the stairs, and Philip Dudley received the answer to his oft-repeated question at last. When he was told that the sight of his eyes had left him for ever, he said, almost quietly, "Oh, Mary! Oh, my God!" And the progress of his recovery was not retarded by so much as a single hour.

It happened at this time that Mary Holt was away from home. On the very night of the day on which they had met at St. Michael's Gate Philip was taken ill, and on the following day was forbidden to leave his room. Then came a time of much anxiety and sorrow, and Mary perceived that her love and duty were at issue. Mrs. Holt was delicate.

She was strongly recommended a change of air. She would not leave home without Mary. Mary could not consent to quit the neighbourhood of the Hall till Philip was out of danger. When she was assured that the fever had left him and he was likely to amend, she yielded to her step-mother's wishes, and accompanied her to the north of England in search of a more bracing air.

Intelligence as to the amount of strength Philip regained was daily forwarded by one of his sisters to Mary. But of the calamity which was known after she left to have befallen him word was not sent to her. As soon as Philip was suffered to hear them read, Mary sent him a few lines every day, and the girls perceived what a burden of difficulty would attach to the writing of these short but dearly-prized letters, should Mary be made aware that the loss of Philip's sight was no longer thought to be temporary, before it was deemed advisable to impart the sad truth to himself. Moreover, each shrank from the infliction of the blow.

Each was, in a manner, spared the graceless task. On the morning after Philip had heard the bad news, they were saved all further deliberation. Their brother announced that he had a letter to write that day, and one of the girls must furnish eyes and hand. Each and all of the loving hands were at his beck. Lizzie and May were deputed to the office (to be performed by one of them), as being, respectively, the eldest of his sisters, and the one who was perhaps the dearest—whose nature was at all events most nearly in accord with his own. Finally, the missive was penned by Miss Dudley, whose right of seniority was too precious to be waived on such an occasion as the writing of Philip's first letter.

"Of course it is to *her*, Lizzie. Please begin: *My own dear Mary! I call you so for the last time on earth. I am*

blind. Gore told me yesterday my sight will not come back. It seems it would have been better for us both if my life had also passed away. But as to that, God knows best, and will comfort you. Of course our engagement is at an end. One thing your superstitious sailor rejoices at—that he suffered you to make no vow. This is a misfortune we could not avert, and which we cannot escape from. Shall I ask of you one thing? Meet me a month hence from to-day, at the old tryst by St. Michael's Gate, to say farewell. One hour more. I think you will come, dear love. And the remembrance of it will make a brightness in the years to come. To hear that you are blest will always be the prayer of your devoted friend and lover. Then I will sign my name."

This, dictated with many pauses, and an injunction here and there to "set it right, Lizzie," when strength failed and the thoughts came brokenly, was the letter Philip sent to Mary Holt. His voice, low and hollow as it was, had been steady to the last; and Lizzie Dudley, looking up from the letter, was startled to see that down his wasted cheeks great tears were flowing silently and fast. Yet more pathetic was the helpless appeal of his next words: "Oh, Lizzie! you are looking at me. Don't tell May!"

She had with difficulty kept her own tears from falling on the page on which she wrote, and could not wholly restrain the sound of her weeping. Now, in a moment, she was on her knees at his bedside.

"Oh, be comforted, my darling! Mary will never turn away from you."

"That is all over, Liz. And so is *this*. You will never see me so again. Now bring your writing-case, and guide my hand, as the children say, while I sign my name to her."

Which was done. These were early days, and Philip's

weak right hand could not even have held the pen without support from his sister. But the time soon came when he was able to sign his name, unaided, with wonderful dexterity, and even to write a letter legibly.

From Scarborough Mary wrote in answer, a letter filled with expressions of bitterest grief and sweetest sympathy. But evidently, as the girls were obliged to confess, accepting Dudley's resignation of his title to her hand. They were bewildered. Philip laughed at them, with a breaking heart. "It makes no difference at all," he said. "I could not marry her now." But it did make a difference, even so.

Before the day which Philip had appointed for their meeting, it was found he would not be able to keep the tryst so soon. Another time was named, one of his sisters writing to Mary to make the exact day and hour clear. To this letter there came no reply. Philip said none was needed. In her answer to his own, Mary had said not a word of the meeting. The girls supposed she intended to be with him at the Hall before the day he had named. Now, as time went on, and no preparations were made in the village for the arrival of the Holts, they shook their heads and looked blankly at one another. Philip was confident at heart. No answer was needed. Mary would be there. Perhaps Mrs. Holt could not yet return home. No matter. Mary would be there. "I should deserve that you should despise me, if I could be mean enough not to put faith in you."

At length is arrived the autumn day on which Philip and Mary are to meet at St. Michael's Gate. Already the old beech is gorgeous with decay. The copse is aflame with gold and crimson tints among the green. The sky is blue. The robins sing serenely. The scene is pervaded with a

sense of coming rest, of which Philip is dimly conscious, leaning on his sister's arm. They have driven to the nearest point, and then walked slowly over the short piece of the table-land still intervening between them and the gate. It is yet early for the tryst.

"Now leave me, May, and be in the carriage at the same gate we entered by, at half-past four. Mary will take me to you there."

"Oh! let me fetch you, Philip!"

"Mary will lead me to the carriage, dear."

And May is obliged to leave him. "Just let me kiss you, Phil, before I go." In old times she would not have asked his leave. But, in old times, her undisguised intent, if not welcomed, might have been so easily abandoned. She will not surprise his acceptance of her caresses. He kisses her gently, but absorbed. He is alone.

How many hours are longer in their course than those first few minutes at St. Michael's Gate, before the church clock chimes the appointed time? After which the quarters sound in horrid haste. Not because their moments are past in a sweet converse, which it is hard to know must shortly end, but because of an anguish of waiting which causes them to fly on fallen angels' wings. The looked-for hour has come. Mary will soon be here. She will not keep him waiting. But stay! Clocks may differ a little. A few minutes are easily accounted for. Heavens! Another chime—and no Mary. A quarter of an hour spent in waiting. How fast the time will go when she is here! And where is she? Is not this too much time to allow for a possible difference in clocks? She *must* be coming now.

He is sitting near the gate on a seat which May has provided, so placed that he will not be disturbed by the

passers-by. There are no passers-by this afternoon. Not a footfall to waken a hope, or deepen the despair. Yet many a gentle rustle in the copse has made him start, with momentarily-arrested attention. The minutes are trooping past. He can feel them as they go. Yet even his strained sense of their swift flight has not kept pace with the reality. The chimes again! It cannot be. It is. Has not May been in error about the time of their starting? No; it is four o'clock. Four times the bells ring out for the hour that is sped; and then four heavy strokes to usher in the one that is now to be. How the dull boom echoes on his lonely heart! Half the allotted hour gone by—and no Mary. She will not come. Yet that is unthinkable—"if I could be mean enough not to have faith in you."

But she does not come. And no light accident can be thought to have prevented such a meeting. Had there been any serious one, news would have reached the Hall ere this, and followed him to St. Michael's Gate. For a while longer he must cling to the hope of her coming. By the time the next quarter chimes he has persuaded himself that Mary has mistaken or forgotten the hour his sister named—that she will seek the old tryst at the same hour at which they met in June—the last time he saw her face. Therefore, expectancy being removed to three-quarters of an hour's distance, the intervening time lags heavily, and the spaces between the chimes appear as endless as before they seemed evanescent. But, with a point of time before him up to which he has allowed himself to hope, all is not yet a blank. As to the drowning man the bodiless waif upon the hungry sea, so to the heart of the lover is this forlornest hope. True that the very tension of soul with which his thoughts are fixed on the expected good causes the darkness of disappointment haunting

the near distance to loom with profounder menace than before. Yet his heart beats high, and refuses to sink to the contemplation of the shallows on which it may presently be wrecked.

During the span of time that elapses till five o'clock bodily weakness is nothing to him. The shadows of approaching evening, which the girls have anxiously plotted that he should avoid, are unperceived. She will come. She is coming. It will be five o'clock at last.

At last it is five o'clock. No Mary. Is there any way to escape a doubt of her goodness? It cannot be sought at this moment. In love we know, "faith and unfaith can ne'er be equal powers." The battle between them, therefore, will have to be fought out hereafter. Weak and miserable, Philip stands for yet a short period of all but hopeless waiting, leaning on the gate, and hardly able to think—the steadfast spirit in abeyance to the exhausted body. At last he turns away, and begins to stumble over the meadow-land in the direction in which he believes is the gate he and May came in at two hours since.

May has been looking out for him this long while. For a considerable time after she left him she waited at the gate where they were to meet when the tryst was over, in some expectation that he might call her back. He did not call or come in sight, and she began to think that Mary was there, indeed. Still she did not leave the spot. At half-past four the carriage returned for her, and from that time May has kept eager watch, with eye and ear, for some sign of Philip's approach. She has not dared to go within sight of the gate. It is tacitly understood that he shall be unwatched. If Mary is with him—and Philip was so sure of her coming—she will not suffer him to remain with her beyond his strength.

But at last May can bear the anxiety no longer ; and she has started across the mead towards St. Michael's Gate, when she perceives her brother, alone, making his way unsteadily over the brow of the hill in an exactly opposite direction to that which would have led him to the road. A labourer, with a pick over his shoulder, who was pursuing a short cut to the Other Side, stands at a little distance watching his uncertain movements, apparently in a contemplative state of mind, and hazy as to the desirability of offering any aid to the sightless man.

"Phil! Phil!" she cries out anxiously; "stop for me! I am coming. It is only May," in some fear lest, deceived by the distance, he may suppose that Mary has come at last.

"I knew it was only you," he says, wearily, as she approaches and lays her hand on his own. Then, suddenly, he catches her in his arms, and for a few moments holds her in a tight embrace. "I am a bad brother!"

"No, no," sobs May, and cannot say any more.

"I am, little girl! and I don't deserve *you*." Adding humbly, "Now, May, take me home." And they go off together hand-in-hand. As she thinks of the dreary hours of his lonely watching by the gate her heart is full of a reverent pity that can find no words. In the carriage they sit silent, with his hand in hers. Only once, just before they reach home, he says to her, "May, you will tell them that—she did not come." A pressure of May's fingers makes reply.

* * * * *

And from that time the girls never spoke to their brother of Mary Holt—uncertain in what terms they could allude to her whom they did not love, but whom they were sure that he loved still.

THIRD HOUR, IN ST. MICHAEL'S CHURCH.

I had a vision just before the dawn :
I dreamed that I, the living, met my dead.

A BRIEF glance at some succeeding events, and we approach the last scene of the little play. Not all the dramas of life are long, even when they contain, for the individual, all its glory and most of its deep pain.

Was Mary Holt entirely to blame for that sorrowful watch beside St. Michael's Gate? I trow not. Is anyone ever wholly to blame for anything in this world of complicated motives, distracting ties, and imperfectly directed endeavour?

When Philip's letter came to her at Scarborough, Mary's grief was passionate and real. Mrs. Holt was unobtrusively kind and sympathetic, and said a few words to Mary, in which there was more consideration for the girl's trouble than she was wont to bestow on any but her own.

Mary wept scalding tears in the almost sleepless nights, but was from the first persuaded that her life was not to be sacrificed to Philip Dudley. Is there another word in our own, or any language, that is so often taken in vain as this grand word, Sacrifice? Mary must have meant that she would forego no comfort in the sense of personal freedom for the sake of carrying joy into the blighted life of the man who loved her, and whom she thought she loved.

Again, Philip had finally surrendered her, and would not, she was sure, consent to a renewal of the engagement between them. Would he, in his blindness, any longer care for its fulfilment? Yes, selfishly he might; but Philip was

other than selfish. Here Mary's conclusion was just. At all events, he had settled the matter. There it must rest, she thought, let her sorrow be never so great. Of his sorrow? Well, she would go to him, she would meet him, as he asked, to bid farewell. It would make him "a brightness" to look back upon. She would surely go.

But even before the answer to his letter was written, doubts had crept in as to the wisdom of the act—for both their sakes. Such doubts were the cause of her omitting to mention the tryst in her reply—she would not promise, for she might decide to forego the meeting—she could not in words deny his last request. When she got a letter from Edith Dudley, saying that the time of the appointed meeting must be changed, and noting with precision the day and hour at which she would now be waited for, Mary's heart failed her. They seemed so certain that she meant to keep the tryst. They were a set of silly girls! And he? How should she tell him that she would not go?

By this time Mrs. Holt had brought strong pressure to bear on her step-daughter's mind. It would be impossible, she said, for her to travel westward for many months to come. Mary could not go alone. As to that, Miss Holt refused to admit the plea. Then, did Mary suppose that if she were weak enough to go, she would be strong enough to come away? Would she not be led into some promise for the future which she must give up her whole life to keep? This touched Mary home. *Could* she see his dear face, listen to the music in his voice, be stayed on his supporting arm—then leave that tender shelter for the "empty world again?" For the present the world would be void without Philip Dudley; much worse to bear, she thought—perhaps impossible—if she must see him first. He believed he could bear

it, and perhaps he could ; but would it not be for him also a further trial which he might well be spared ? On this view of the case Mrs. Holt was eloquent. Mary might not see it now, she said (aware that it was Mary who had seen it first), but hereafter she would certainly upbraid herself for selfishly yielding to a request born of weakness, merely because she wanted courage to say "No."

The end we know. Doubts of her power to resist his presence, and perfect willingness to accept what was in truth the holocaust of his renunciation of her, decided Mary to send no answer to Edith's letter—a course which still left it open to herself to keep the tryst. She would have to set off betimes on the appointed day. The night before, Mrs. Holt required her attendance to a late hour ; was ill and nervous ; and felt, she said, most thankful that Mary had decided not to leave her on the morrow. In her heart Mary was conscious that pressure was still being put upon her to keep her in the north. She had always declared that the matter was not finally settled—that she might yet be up and off by the early train. She could walk to meet it easily, by getting up half-an-hour sooner than would be needful if she ordered a conveyance. So there was room for a distracting state of doubt to the last moment. Yet the decision was unconsciously made long ago. Mrs. Holt knew this, but would do her best to confirm it. And Mary yielded, stifling the cry of her heart with a poor logic—telling herself it would be cruel to desert her step-mother who was ill ; and her heart being silenced, in part believing the plea.

At this time Ramsay Fairbank, Squire Fairbank's only son—and soon to be Squire himself, if report spoke truly of the old gentleman's state of health—was on a visit to Scarborough. His home was not very far from Arranwelly. Mrs. Holt had

friends in his neighbourhood, to whom she sent rose-coloured descriptions of the charms of her present abode. It is just possible that they, in their turn, recommended the spot to young Fairbank for an autumn trip. The hint was obeyed. On this very young man Mrs. Holt had once founded hopes of a brilliant establishment for her step-daughter. Old Fairbank was a far richer man than Squire Dudley, and had but one son; and, instead of the eight Miss Dudleys, there had only been two Miss Fairbanks, one of whom died in her childhood, and the other had "married well."

Mary was disgusted by the arrival of Fairbank at Scarborough. Mrs. Holt considered the occasion a good one for judiciously paving the way. She took little notice of the gentleman in Mary's presence, never remarked that she thought the young lady uncivil (which she frequently did), pretended to be vexed by his advent, and even consented with a good grace to Mary's proposal to leave Scarborough earlier than she had intended. The concession of a week hardly satisfied Mary, but Mrs. Holt would find it impossible to travel before the end of October; so, with this short curtailment of the irksome time, she was forced to express herself pleased. During the week which would intervene Mrs. Holt felt sure *some* progress would be made. Perhaps it was.

Philip Dudley had left Arranwelly before the Holts returned to the Other Side. Of his movements Mary received information from an unexpected source. Edith Dudley, the Squire's youngest child, was at that time a rather forward maiden of fourteen. Of her father she thought—a little; of herself, a great deal; more of Lizzie and Agatha—far more of May (the rest of the girls were nowhere); and more *ad infinitum* of her two big brothers.

These had a pet name for their young sister—they called her “Little Minx.” And, good little girl as she was on the whole, it may be thought that she acted up to her name on this occasion.

As soon as Philip had regained sufficient strength to travel he left home for Italy, and May accompanied him. On the day of their departure Edith wandered about the now, to her, desolated house, and her heart was sore against Mary Holt. Presently she strayed into Philip’s dressing-room, wherein he had lately sat much alone. On his table was a large desk, open, and almost empty. Round the desk and under the table, just outside the waste-paper basket which stood beneath, were a few bits of paper torn into small shreds, and evidently intended to be deposited amongst the rubbish whence they had for a season escaped. Tender over all things that his dear hand had touched, Edith gathered them up, and observed in doing so that they were scrawled over in what was becoming familiar to her eyes as Philip’s handwriting. Caught by a word, she wondered if she might try and decipher the sense of what he had written? This she proceeded to do, piecing the scraps of paper together with much patience and considerable difficulty. The puzzle before her needed skill. Many pieces were lost in the mass of papers, all torn, which the basket contained, and the remaining ones were not easily put together without a better clue. At last Edith, who had scented verses from the first, was able to make some sense out of a few of the fragments. Philip Dudley was held by the girls to be a poet of no ordinary pretensions. Fluently he wrote, and diligently they sang his “tender rhymes,” Georgie and Agatha setting them to music. These scraps were portions of a poem written in his blindness, and set down in the straggling hand which was

all he had now for use, and in which the lines occasionally interlaced each other and became a labyrinth. Precious fragments! A number of them baffled perseverance, and were relegated to the waste-paper basket, where their fellows awaited them in dire confusion. This is what Edith, with some ingenuity in supplying the missing words, made out of her relics :—

Could she not spare to me
One hour, the first, the last—
Out of the sunbright years,
One hour, too quickly past?

* * * *

Hath she a fear that I,
Cruel with too great woe,
Could not be pitiful
To let my darling go?

And then, less coherently :—

* * * not keep you, sweet!
I will live out my life
With thy retreating feet.

A storm was in Edith Dudley's heart. With the small bits of paper spread out in order before her, the little Minx clenched her hands, and decided to have what she called "a word with Mary Holt." Mary had left Edith's letter unanswered, and had broken Philip's heart. At least, not that; it was made of better stuff than such as *she* could break! But she had forsaken him, refused his last request. He had been wounded by the hand which should have brought him balm. He would *not* have "lived out his life" when she left him—his life was too noble to be wasted upon *her*—but he would have given up all the brightness of it that she might go free and be happy. Free and happy! Edith would never speak to Mary Holt again.

But she wrote her a letter. Impossible to call Miss Holt *dear Mary*—or, *dear* anything—so the letter ran thus :—

“MADAM,

“I do not of course anticipate any reply to this letter. My brother, Mr. Philip Dudley, is restored to health. He has left the Hall for Italy to-day. I have found the enclosed scraps among his papers, and, although I am well aware that he would not desire them to meet your eye” (no, indeed, Edith! though from a different motive to the resentful one that you pretended to impute to him), “I take the liberty of forwarding them to their first-intended address. I hope you will enjoy reading them—as I have done.

“EDITH DUDLEY.”

The fragments were all carefully pasted on a sheet of paper in the form to which Edith's patient endeavours had brought them, and enclosed in the letter. It is possible the child's heart might have softened could she have witnessed Mary's reception of them. Devoured, kissed, passionately bewept, the verses were laid aside in some innermost receptacle of precious things—their rhythm garnered in the poor girl's heart. This time Edith's letter was answered. “Dear Edith,” Mary wrote, “Thank you very much for your letter. I am so glad to know that he is well. You are grieved so greatly for your brother, that you hold me to blame for our misfortune. Try and remember that it is not so, and believe me always yours. Mary Holt.”

This letter Edith never showed to her sisters. There was something in its tone which she had not expected and did not entirely approve. Neither did she tell them of the verses she had sent to the writer.

Little need be added to the history of this period. Mary's

days of mourning have long been ended. She is now a wife and mother of six years' standing. In the summer following Philip's illness she was married to Ramsay Fairbank. The Fairbanks, Mrs. Holt admitted, were of no consideration in the county compared with the Dudleys, but they were enormously wealthy, and the county was "coming round." Mary would occupy a fair position, and have money enough to defy aristocratic prejudices and the petty distinctions of various shades of caste. Old Squire Fairbank, who had purchased the estate, died in little more than a month after the marriage of his son. So Mary reigned at Herons' Hole (the Herons it was usually called) from the close of her honeymoon.

There is a skeleton in every house—a spectre of the buried past in almost every heart. Mary's memory-haunting ghost was accustomed to repeat this, to her, terrible refrain: "Could she not spare to me one hour?" Also it avenged itself in sleep. One dream was a nightmare to Mary Fairbank. She dreamed it first shortly after her marriage. Afterwards it recurred from time to time, always with a fresh shock, unprepared for, yet always recognised in the moment of waking as the grim phantasy of previous visitations. The vision was incoherent in this respect, that it had neither beginning nor end, but burst suddenly on the inner sight, and was snapped off always at the same point, and with the same sense of unfulfilled expectation. But the presentment of it was of a marvellous distinctness. The vision was Philip Dudley. The well-known face and form, with the same blue eyes which she always knew, but could not see to be sightless. They met in some familiar scene—in St. Michael's Churchyard, or at the Gate, or in the old garden of the Hall. Philip held out his arms towards her—not appealingly, but

as if deprecating the reproach that was in eyes and voice—though these were not ungentle. The voice said, “One hour, Mary,” with a piercing sweetness. And Mary would have spoken, would have told him of the struggles of her heart—but she awoke.

On more than one occasion Mrs. Fairbank had told her husband, “I have been dreaming of Philip again, Ramsay,” with dreary intonation.

“Then I wish, dear, you would dream of something pleasanter,” or the like, had been Mr. Fairbank’s reply—by which she was not encouraged to say more.

* * * * *

It is towards evening of one of the longest days of summer. There are visitors at “The Herons.” Ramsay Fairbank has driven them and his wife to Arranwelly, a distance of about ten miles, that they may see St. Michael’s Church, which is an object of ancient interest, and enjoy the beauty of valley, hill, and sea from the summit of the mound.

Mrs. Fairbank retains the privilege (dating from the time of her late father, and courteously allowed by the present vicar) of entering the church at all hours, being in possession of a key, which will admit her even after it is closed for the night. The key is in requisition this evening. When they have all passed in, Mr. Fairbank removes the key from the lock of the door, which he closes, and places it in his pocket—with half absent-minded precaution lest any passing pilgrim, attracted by the projecting handle of the key, should be minded to follow them into the little church.

The small building with its interesting relics having been duly explored, it is proposed to adjourn to St. Michael’s Mound, and survey the prospect while it is yet day. It

happens that the Fairbanks have been joined by a gentleman whom they met on the meads, after the waggonette was put up at the "Stag" in Arranwelly. Major Lynn's dog-cart awaits him at the same place. He has spent some hours in the neighbourhood of Arranwelly, and was, when they met him, making his way in leisurely fashion to the "Stag," whence he will drive home. He is a neighbour, and his destination is close to "The Herons." He has, however, turned back, and gone with the little party into St. Michael's Church, but declines to ascend the hill. He has proffered a seat in his dog-cart to any one of them who would prefer that mode of conveyance home. The proposal has met with no acceptance.

Mrs. Fairbank is tired, the view from the mound is familiar to her. She elects to remain in the church, while her husband and his French cousins ascend the hill.

They are gone. Major Lynn, evidently anxious to be on the road, politely places himself at Mrs. Fairbank's disposal. She arranges for him to take his leave, and he is shortly wending along the church-path to the town. Ramsay has explained that he will return to St. Michael's before dark.

Mary is now alone with the memories wherewith the church is rife. Memories, chiefly, of Philip Dudley, although the occasions on which they have been together there have been scanty of late years. During all her life there have been, at intervals, Sundays on which Philip has been visible in the Hall pew. On the whole, however, but little of his short life has been spent at home, and the memories of childhood and first youth are not deeply associated with him in Mary's mind. It is on two more recent meetings, when he was last home on leave, that her remembrance chiefly dwells. It was here he found her on the day when she plighted to

him her maiden troth. She was alone, longing for a helping hand to ply the bellows of the organ that she might play thereon. Philip had joyfully performed the task. It was here—in the porch, at least—they had spent a part of their last meeting-hour, exchanging love-tokens, and speaking, in hope and faith and love, of the time when they would meet again after the coming separation.

Of Philip's present life Mary Fairbank knows nothing. Hardly if Philip is alive or dead. Up to the time of her marriage communication with the Hall did not cease. Since then it has sunk into abeyance. A sudden fearful suggestion of terror lest, if he is dead, she should be also guilty of his death awakens in Mary's heart the old remorse.

She wanders into the organ-loft, and sitting down in front of the music king, folds her arms before her, lets her head fall on them, and gives herself up to tender thoughts of a great love and trust neglected and betrayed, for the first time since she has been Ramsay Fairbank's wife.

Meanwhile Mr. Fairbank and the De Neuilles have mounted the hill, which is neither steep nor long, fully admired the fair scene around and below them, and are descending by another path. This leads them somewhat farther from the way through the churchyard than Fairbank was at first aware. They will have to turn some distance out of their way, instead of striking by a short cut into the church-path, to apprize Mary of their return. Marion de Neuville proposes to run round the base of the hill to the little church and fetch Madame Marie, and they two will soon overtake the rest, who are to go on slowly over the meads.

"Very well," returns her cousin; "but take the key with you, and ask Mary to lock up the door."

Marion speeds away. In a few minutes she has gained the church, walked round it noiselessly, looked everywhere—as she supposes—for Mary, and not finding her, comes out again, closed the door, and turned the key in the lock with gentle, reverent hands. The place is erie, and Marion is not sorry to be out of it. Yet, given up as it is to the worship of the heretics, it has inspired her soul with an awe which has unfortunately hushed her hands and feet, and prevented the very thought of raising her voice to call “Madame Marie.”

In a few minutes more she has rejoined her cousin and her brother and sister, who are halting in the meadow-land.

“I cannot find her, she is not there.”

“Not there! Mary not in the church! And the door shut?”

“Ah, but no! It was open wide, the door!”

“She must have gone up the hill to meet us, on the other side. Provoking we missed! But I wonder Mary left the door open.”

Now it is Jules de Neuville’s turn to go on quest. He will run back to the top of the hill, and follow them to the “Stag” when he has found Madame.

A little uneasy, Ramsay Fairbank pursues his way to the town, to order the horses to. When, some time afterwards, Jules arrives with no news of Mary, there is much perplexity among the little group. Ramsay had felt some hope of finding her at the “Stag.” She might have accompanied Major Lynn to the town, and he waiting for them there. This not being the case, and Jules having returned unsuccessful, what is to be done? She cannot have gone home with Major Lynn? The cousins, however, are in favour of this supposition.

"Indeed, I cannot believe it," Mr. Fairbank repeats. "It would be so strange, don't you think so, Marion?"

Marion demurs. "Madame Marie is no longer *jeune fille*."

"But I mean she would not go home without letting us know."

Inquiries at the "Stag" are fruitless. Some officers from the Dépôt have been in Arranwelly to-day, and much business has produced a little confusion at the inn. Major Lynn's dogcart has been standing there, Mr. Fairbank is informed, but has now gone home. One of the bystanders thinks he had a lady with him. Another is sure he had not: "'Twas one o' the tother gentry as took the young lady, tandem, downtwod Arran Bridge."

"It were *not*, Thummas Smart!" the first speaker declares, with certain enforcements, which lead to a wordy duel precluding all further enlightenment.

After a long delay, Ramsay Fairbank submits to be overruled by the majority. If Mary has gone home, she will be getting anxious in her turn. A proposal that one of the party should go back as far as the church to look for her once more is abandoned as useless, even silly. It is not likely she would loiter about the hill or the meadow-lands so late as this. She knows the horses are at the "Stag," and would be sure to have sought her husband there before now, if by any accident she and Jules should have missed each other on the mound. In the last resort it is decided to leave the groom behind. Mackay will remain at the "Stag," and in the event of his mistress arriving there after all, will procure a conveyance and accompany her back to the Herons. This arranged, the cousins set out for home.

At about this time Mary is realizing her position in

St. Michael's Church. When she rouses from her reverie it is nearly dark, but the shadows have crept so tenderly along the soft gray aisles, that she has not till now been aware of their slow but steady advance. Where is Ramsay? How late they are staying on the Mound! The fine full moon is up. She can see it struggling with departing day through the faint outlines of the beautiful old window in the east. The night is very fair, and must have tempted them beyond the bounds of their intent. She will wait for them in the porch, or go on a few steps toward the hill. The door is closed. Mary thought they had left it open. The door is locked. Mary is deserted; they are gone. It does not take her many minutes to perceive the full details of the case. They have looked for her in the church. Since she has heard no sound, perhaps Marion or Aimée came alone, and failed to discover her retreat. They have sought her at the "Stag," and, not finding her there either, why have they not returned? They have supposed she has gone home with Major Lynn. Would Ramsay believe she would go without letting him know? They *must* have supposed it unless they are looking for her still? Mary hopes not, as they will never find her—being apparently unvisited by the least idea that they may possibly have missed her in the church. In the case of a protracted and fruitless search, she will have to spend the night in St. Michael's; and they will be passing an unquiet time. In any case, it must be hours before Ramsay can return to her. When they get home—as she devoutly hopes they may in about an hour from now—and do not find her, she thinks it will cross their minds at last that she is here, and someone will be sent to release her. At the best, it will be midnight before the deliverer comes. At the worst, it will be a little before 8 a.m., when the church

will be opened for morning prayer. In the meanwhile, "I am glad it is summer time," thinks Mary, who is not greatly dismayed by the outlook on its darkest side. It makes some difference in being shut up for the night in a church, alone, if one has at any period of life played at hide-and-seek in the pews and pulpit.

For a while Mary now and then calls aloud, on the supposition that she has heard a footstep on the gravel-path, and in the hope that it may belong to her husband or one of the de Neuilles. But the echo of her voice is somewhat startling. On the whole, the silence of the solitude is best. Very weary, outworn by the access of grievous thoughts by which she has lately been possessed, Mary removes a cushion from one of the pews, lays it over a memorial stone in the little chancel, and, her head supported on the step with its well-worn kneeler—her own mother's handiwork—outside the altar rails, disposes herself to rest. Very soon time and place have no more dominion over her: she is sleeping for sorrow.

Though she knows it not, it is nigh upon the witching hour of night when her slumber is invaded by a dream. Not unnaturally the vision takes on the face and form of the late object of her waking thoughts. Philip Dudley is standing before her. In her sleep one part of the fear of the past hour becomes reality. She believes that Philip is dead; yet it does not seem to her emancipated spirit beyond measure strange that his bodily presentment should *revisit thus the glimpses of the moon*. At first it seems to her that he has come from far; then that he has just stepped out of one of the graves in the small God's-acre, sweet with gilly-flowers and mignonette and the wafted odour of roses; next that she has herself come forth from another of these, and is standing

with Philip at St. Michael's Gate. There is the old look in his face, the one she has seen so often in a dream, and which speaks to her conscience with a calm reproach. This time, contrary to all former experience, she is aware of those past occasions on which he has faced her thus—only, this meeting, she thinks, is real. This time no inopportune arousal from her sleep will hinder the utterance of the words she has so long in vain essayed to speak. These words are to tell him of the fear that possessed her once, long ago, when he asked her for an hour at St. Michael's Gate—a fear, not of him, but of her own weak heart. "Philip," she begins, reaching her hands up towards him, but with outward-flattened palms, "I could not come. I thought——" and then she stops. The dear vision is bending on her such a look of all-comprehending, all-obliterating love, that she is dumb. Words could but frame an idle protest now. A light that pierces has entered into her soul, making it all alive with the perception that what she would say, he knows; in that she has erred, he pardons; for reproaches he offers her peace. As he holds out his arms she passes into them, looking up into his eyes—not sightless now—and finding balm. The vision was wont to speak. Will he speak now? He does: "For ever, Mary!"

One hour beside St. Michael's, long ago; one hour to throw a lustre on life's few poor years to be; one hour besought; one hour withheld. But rest and forgiveness are for evermore. Precious gifts that heap coals of purifying fire on her head.

These are not Mary's thoughts; her ecstasy holds none. What is that noise? Does it thunder? No; she is lying on the cushioned tombstone in the chancel of St. Michael's Church, where she has been locked in, and her husband has

come to fetch her—that is all—waking the echoes with impatient tread.

“Thank God, you are here, Mary!” he exclaims, as she sits up drowsily in the moonlight.

“Oh, yes! I am here. Is it late? Did you go home? What trouble I have given you!”

“And what an ass I was not to come and look for you myself before we started. Never mind! Let us get out of this. Mackay is waiting at the nearest gate. You were asleep, Mary.”

“I know; and,” reverently, “I dreamed of Philip.”

“I don’t wonder at all! You might dream of *anything*, shut up there like that!”

“Oh, but Ramsay! Let me tell you! It was such a beautiful dream. I think I shall never dream *the other* any more. And I think—that—Philip is dead.”

“You are nervous, dear, and tired;” adding, quickly, “I have had the mare put-to, as Tearaway doesn’t like the shadows in the moonlight, and I thought he might be fidgetty, you know.”

“Yes. What a night to be out in, Ramsay! It feels quite *holy*. I am so glad.”

“Well, so am I,” returns Fairbank, not understanding. “Weren’t you frightened, Mary?”

“No; I am used to it, you know.”

“Used to being shut up in an empty church all night!”

“Used to the church, I mean. And I thought you would come back for me, when you found I was not at home.”

“You *are* a philosopher, Mary!”

“I am so happy, dear!”

She is deeply, royally happy. But, as still he invites no explanation of the repeated expression of her joy; and as

Mackay (whom his master has fetched from the "Stag") is by this time seated behind them, with upright back and folded arms, and head in close proximity with their own, she does not again offer to relate her dream.

* * * * *

Not then, nor thereafter. Only when the news reached them in the morning that Philip had died in Venice, Mary looked at her husband, and he slightly raised his eyebrows in acknowledgment of this strange fulfilment of the few words that, after dreaming her "beautiful dream," she had spoken to him in the meadow: "I think that Philip is dead."

"Poor Dudley!" he remarked. "I suppose he still had that nice sister with him. Well, it's the end of a broken life—a completely broken life. It is to be hoped she has not caught the Venetian fever, too!"

Neither thus was Mary led on to impart to her husband the secret spring of her gladness overnight.

Therefore she pondered the vision in her heart. In it Philip Dudley had forgiven her; and it seemed to Mary that a wrong which has marred, it may be, more than one life on earth, may be set right for ever in the flash of a deathless moment in the land of souls.

The old, weary dream has not since intruded on Mary's sleep. She wonders now and then, when she is not too busy, if she will ever hear Philip's voice again? If so, she thinks, it will not haunt the charnel-house of the long ago, but will tell of pardon and peace, and the past foregone in the everlasting Now. Concerning the old wrong and its finished forgiveness, he will say—not *one hour*, but—"For ever, Mary."

D A R K N E S S .

THE days are dark. The changing sea,
The glory of earth and sky—
Have faded out of the vast gray world,
And left but a memory.
I have lost the Light, and the good it holds
I would give up life to see ;
Your face is in it, my own lost love,
And the Dark is death to me.

Yet even now, might I reach your hand,
With the sunshine in its touch,
All pain were a forfeit lightly paid,
And the cost not overmuch.
Come soon ! To lighten the starless years,
All I ask of love and you,
Is only an hour, my sweet lost love !
One hour between us two !

Darkness.

Words by BARBARA WORDSWORTH.

Music by ARTHUR H. BROWN.

Andante misterioso. ♩ = 88.

mf *f* *ten.* *mf*

1. The days are dark: the changing sea, The glory of earth and sky Have
 2. Yet e-ven now, might I reach your hand, With the sun-shine in its touch, All

p *tenuto.*

com espres. *mp*

fa - ded out of the vast grey world, And left but a me - mo - ry. I have
 pain were a for - feit light - ly paid—And the cost not o - ver - much. Come

Poco più mosso. *cres.*

lost the light—and the good it holds I would give up life to
 soon! To light - en the star - less years, All I ask of love and

Poco più mosso.

mp marcato il basso.

DARKNESS.

agitato. *dim.*

see : Your face is in it, my own lost love, And the dark is death to
you Is on - ly an hour, my sweet lost love, One hour be-tween us

agitato.

The first system of the musical score for 'DARKNESS.' features a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line begins with a treble clef and a key signature of three sharps (F#, C#, G#). It contains the lyrics 'see : Your face is in it, my own lost love, And the dark is death to you Is on - ly an hour, my sweet lost love, One hour be-tween us'. The piano accompaniment starts with a bass clef and the same key signature. It includes dynamic markings 'agitato.' and 'dim.'.

f *p con espres.*

me ! Your face is in it, my own lost love, And the dark is death to
two ! Is on - ly an hour, my sweet lost love, One hour between us

f ten. *p*

The second system of the musical score continues the vocal and piano parts. The vocal line has the lyrics 'me ! Your face is in it, my own lost love, And the dark is death to two ! Is on - ly an hour, my sweet lost love, One hour between us'. The piano accompaniment features dynamic markings 'f' and 'p con espres.'.

f *p* *rall.*

me ! Your face is in it, my own lost love, And the dark is death to
two ! Is on - ly an hour, my sweet lost love, One hour be-tween us

fz *p col canto.*

The third system of the musical score continues the vocal and piano parts. The vocal line has the lyrics 'me ! Your face is in it, my own lost love, And the dark is death to two ! Is on - ly an hour, my sweet lost love, One hour be-tween us'. The piano accompaniment features dynamic markings 'f', 'p', 'rall.', 'fz', and 'p col canto.'.

me ! *two !*

tempo. *pp* *p* *rall. pp*

mp

The fourth system of the musical score concludes the piece. The vocal line has the lyrics 'me ! two !'. The piano accompaniment features dynamic markings 'tempo.', 'pp', 'p', 'rall. pp', and 'mp'. The system ends with a double bar line and repeat signs.



H I L D A.



Surely, yon Heaven, where angels see God's face,
Is not so distant as we deem,
From this low earth.



At the time I first made Hilda's acquaintance her name, so far as she could be said to possess any name, was J'mima Grub. "In the worst Inn's worst room"—and I may add, in the worst slum's worst street—we saw her first. The lady with whom I penetrated to the abode where J'mima was the slave of slaves, was no stranger to the dens of East London. There was a vacancy among the girls in her Orphanage, and she filled it with J'mima Grub. We understood that the child had no parents; though, when we asked J'mima herself the question, she replied by trenchantly demanding what that was to us? As it did not appear on the surface to be any business of ours, we were dumb. No opposition, however, was made to my friend's covering J'mima's unclean raggedness with a cloak she had brought for the purpose, and bearing her away to bathe and taste pure air.

As I stood sponsor for J'mima, she was baptized in my Christian, and my mother's surname—Hilda Langley. When Hilda was washed, and combed, and dressed, she could hardly have been recognised. When she had been for a while under gentle, careful discipline, all resemblance to J'mima Grub had disappeared. Even the wide, hungry black eyes, searching still, were softened to wear a look of human intelligence joined to human ruth.

About two years after Hilda was received into the Orphanage she came to live with me. After a manner, I purchased her—saying to my friend, "I will give you two of those white pigeons you admire so greatly, if I may take Hilda, and train her to wait on me." The exchange, laughingly proposed, was literally carried out, and Hilda became my little servitor—a slave, yet free; yielding me the willing obedience, unbought by fear or favour, which is the only true service—paying the loving duty of the little captive maid who waited on the wife of Naaman the Syrian.

Hilda was, we supposed, about twelve years old when she came to me. My home is not far from the Orphanage. It is a pretty country-house, of by no means imposing dimensions, with a smooth lawn, perfected by the tender shadows of some noble trees. There is no extended view from the garden, but it is a spot of loveliness and peace. Bright with a border of summer flowers, flecked with the shadows of trees which are the delight of the lovely little long-tailed chatter-mags (a diminutive species of wagtail, whose rightful name I am not careful to recall), sunny in the early morning, when the fair white birds from the neighbouring dovecot generally hover over it, shady and cool and sweet in the long summer and autumn afternoons, my lawn is my Paradise. And to the uninitiated I would venture to suggest that there

may be delights in Eden, even if Adam be not there; measured delights, of course—a sort of mezzo-tint of happiness, not altogether despicable in its way.

As I have, however, very little to say about Hilda, I will not linger over the recital. The girl's health gradually improved under the more salubrious conditions of her new life; but she was not strong, and she has never grown up to the average height of woman. Small and pale, with a childish figure, and a brightly intelligent face—as she came to me four years ago—so she remains, with little outward alteration, at this time. The work so well begun at the Orphanage it behoved me to carry on to the best of my power. I always had Hilda with me for two or three hours in the day, teaching her, talking with her, and watching with great delight over her mental growth. Also I learned of Hilda, and on one occasion this was the manner of her teaching :—

She had been with me many months. One morning I observed the girl was ailing. I told her to put work aside, and go and sit in the garden. “I am going into the village, Hilda, and when I come home, if you are well enough, we will have the books out, under the chestnut-tree.” She thanked me, and I went out. On my return, however, I was surprised to see no sign of Hilda on the lawn. I concluded she was tired, and had gone indoors. This was not the case. Presently, on entering the stable-yard, to my astonishment I there beheld the child, seated on a stool, in high relief against the gray stone wall. She had on some light summer frock, and a crimson hood that she used to wear at St. Margaret's hung loosely round her neck. Her dark piercing eyes were intensely fixed, as it appeared to me, on some object on the roof of the house; but, on turning, I

perceived there was nothing there—not even a white cat blinking in the sun. Some seconds passed before Hilda was conscious of my presence. She did not then immediately rise or speak.

“Hilda! What induces you to sit in the stable-court when I told you to go and rest in the shade on the lawn?”

“I beg your pardon, Ma’am.”

“Well, but why are you perched up there? You might have been so comfortable on a chair under the tree!”

Hilda regards the high wooden stool, from which she has risen, and which is unevenly placed on the stones of the yard, and smiles a little. “I can’t see the house from the lawn, Ma’am.”

“But what were you staring at the house for? There was nothing on it.”

“Please, Ma’am, there were.”

“You should say ‘was,’ Hilda. You can write very nicely now, and you must remember to speak in the same way.”

“Yes, Ma’am.”

“But what did you see on the roof?”

“The chimbleys, Ma’am.”

“The chimneys!” with exasperated emphasis. “What nonsense, child! Come out of the sun, and let us sit down under the chestnut. And, Hilda, if you can explain yourself, I wish you would.”

“Yes, Ma’am. The chimbleys was beautiful!” (“*Were*, Hilda!” “Yes, Ma’am.”) “And the smoke were a-curling, and a-curling, and a curling”—I must give up the past tense for this time, and let the child go on—“almost like—but I didn’t want to tell you, Ma’am, ’cause you never like to hear me talk of Rickety Bill.”

"Goodness *me*, Hilda Langley! What has Ric——*he* to do with it?"

"We used to watch 'em together, Ma'am, when I was quite young——"

"That was a long while ago, I suppose, Hilda?"

"Yes, Ma'am, it were."

"Go on."

"Rickety Bill and me used to get out on the window-ledge and watch the smoke a-going up, and up, and up, and never coming down again——"

"But it does come down again, Hilda."

"P'raps so, Ma'am; but we didn't think so when we was children, playing at smoke, you see."

"How did you play at smoke, Hilda?"

"Well, Ma'am, when Rickety Bill had the luck to cadge a halfpenny for himself, we used to play for it. Say, you choose *that* chimbley,"—pointing in the air—"and I choose *that*, then you count the curls, and whichever has the most curls, there's the halfpenny."

"Yes, yes; I see." But I was now anxious to change the subject. "You had more smoke in London, Hilda, but you never saw such bright green turf as this?"

"No, Ma'am."

"Nor such trees? Nor such lights and shades? Nor such snowy pigeons, Hilda?"

"No, Ma'am."

"MacDonald calls them 'white doves, like the thoughts of a lady.'"

"It must be very nice to be a lady," remarks Hilda, "and to have such pretty thoughts as *them*," with a jerk of her knowing little head towards the pigeon-house.

"Yes, indeed, Hilda. You never saw anything like

those in London, did you? Nor such a blue sky as that?"

"Oh, yes, Ma'am! Bluer than that."

"Bluer than *that* glorious blue 'lift'! But how much could you see at a time?"

"Only a little bit, Ma'am. I never thought the sky was half so large as it is here. But I always knew it was deep—very deep. I think if you only see a little bit at a time, Ma'am, it makes it look bluer like."

"Bluer than it looks *now*, Hilda, over there in the shade? It *could* not." Hilda looks doubtful. "It is so grand, so lovely, and so still, it makes me think of Heaven and God. Does it not make you also, Hilda?"

"Yes," says Hilda, quietly. "It always did."

"What, in Dixey's Court?"

"Yes, Ma'am."

"But, child, you had never heard of God!"

"Oh, yes, Ma'am, when we swore." After which reply Hilda is slightly confused. I lay my hand on hers, and question gently:—

"Then how did you think of Him?"

"I don't know, Ma'am. Only when the sky looked so blue, and so deep—so *awful* deep—and the smoke was going up farther and farther, and higher and higher, and I never knew it come down again, I thought p'raps He lived up there. And," in a low voice, "when it were a fine day, I didn't swear."

"Why not, Hilda?"

"I thought it would be no use—He wouldn't do such dreadful things if He lived up there, when the sky looked like *that*. I didn't know any better then, you know, Ma'am."

"No. Did you ever speak of those thoughts to Rickety Bill?"

"Oh, no, Ma'am! He'd have wollopped me."

"Would he, now? I wonder why?"

"Bill didn't like to look up in the sky at all—only to count the smoke. He said there was nothing behind it. And he couldn't bear me to look either, 'cause it stopped his nickin' the halfpenny." Not pausing for an explanation of this obscure passage, I allow Hilda to proceed. "But he did like *wells*, Ma'am. Rickety Bill were a oner for wells."

"Hilda! I *can not*——"

"I beg your pardon, Ma'am."

"But tell me, child, what he used to do at the wells."

"He went down them, Ma'am—ever so far down. I don't know how he come up again! But he always said he never come to the bottom, so they *was* worth lookin' in, he said; there was something behind *them*."

"Do you think he thought of the wells as *you* did of the *sky*?"

"Maybe. Bill wasn't much for talking. Only once, when he'd been swearin' awful at his grandfather, 'cause he were lame, he'd forgot the well was there; at least I thought he'd forgot it maybe, 'cause I saw him afterwards lookin' into it—*so*, you see, Ma'am—and sayin' it all backwards."

"What, the swearing, Hilda? I am so glad he said it backwards!" And my heart cries out of Dixey's Court, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I knew it not." It occurs to me also to consider the fact that the consciousness of Rickety Bill—the tyrant, the bully, and the thief—taking off his curses by repeating them backwards in the presence of the Spirit of the well, had at that time reached a higher stand-point than that of his unhappy little yokefellow, who

only did not curse on a fine day because it would be *no use*. On this I make no comment to the child.

I do not think Hilda ever now seeks a vantage-ground on a summer afternoon whence she can see the chimneys and be reminded of those wreaths of smoke that went winding up, and up, and up, to the patches of blue sky that were so "awful deep." Doubtless the thought of returning to Dixey's Court would be to her at this time as that of a descent into hell. But Hilda knows that He is *there* also. Thousands of years ago the grand old Poet-King sought to make Israel sharers in the same high lore. In these latter days, of a member of the Christian brotherhood it may be said that she learned the truth from a little girl with keen black eyes, who acquired it unconsciously in intervals of watching the murky wreaths curl upward from the chimneys of the lowest of London alleys, while *playing at smoke* for a halfpenny, previously "cadged" for the purpose by her playmate "Rickety Bill."

LITTLE BROWN SPARROW.

LITTLE brown sparrow upon the wall,
Are you the bird Father lets not fall
Without the hand that He holds to all?
Little brown sparrow, if I were you,
I know very well what I would do
Or ever away to my nest I flew—

Or ever away to my soft dry nest,
With rustling wings and a swelling breast,
I fluttered away to my short night's rest.
I'd open my beak as wide as you,
And chirp and twitter as brown birds do,
With a lowly heart, and a gladsome too,
Little brown sparrow!

Little Brown Sparrow.

Words by BARBARA WORDSWORTH.

Music by ARTHUR H. BROWN.

$\text{♩} = 63$. *Andante semplice.*

The piano introduction consists of two staves. The right hand plays a melody of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment of eighth notes. The tempo is marked *Andante semplice* with a quarter note equal to 63 beats per minute. The dynamic is *mf*.

The vocal entry begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The melody is simple and easy to remember. The piano accompaniment starts with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat, featuring a melody of eighth notes. The dynamic is *mp*.

1. Lit - tle brown spar - row up - on the wall, Are you the
2. Or e - ver a - way to my soft dry nest, With rust - ling

The vocal melody continues with the words "bird Fa - ther lets not fall With - out the hand that He holds to wings, And a swell - ing breast, I fluttered a - way to my short night's". The piano accompaniment continues with a steady eighth-note pattern. The tempo is marked *rall.* at the end of the line.

The vocal melody concludes with the words "all? rest: Lit - tle brown I'd o - pen my". The piano accompaniment features a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand and a steady eighth-note pattern in the left hand. The dynamic is *mf*. The tempo is marked *a tempo.* and *ten.* at the end of the line.

LITTLE BROWN SPARROW.

cres.

spar-row, if I were you, I know ve-ry well what
beak as wide as you, And chirp and twit-ter as

f *rit.*

I would do, Or e-ver a-way to my nest I
brown birds do, With a low-ly heart, and a glad-some,

col canto.

After 2nd verse only.
mf

flew.
too. Lit-tle brown spar-row! Lit-tle brown spar-row!

à piacere.

mf *p* *f* **• FINE.**

Symph. after 1st verse.

mf *f* *p*



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